

**MEN UNAFRAID**  
**FOUR PIONEERS OF PROPHECY**

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*A Study of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah,  
and the Herald of the Restoration*

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**ROLLIN H. WALKER**

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To my dear friend and  
fellow worker in the  
Kingdom, Dr Mackay,  
With every good  
wish—

Yours  
H. A. Kirkland

Luna  
Jan. 24, 1924



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PROFESSOR ROLLIN H. WALKER

A STUDY OF GENESIS AND EXODUS

STUDY OF JOHN'S GOSPEL

STUDY OF LUKE'S GOSPEL

A BOOK OF DRAMAS ON AMOS, HOSEA, ISAIAH, AND  
THE HERALD OF THE RESTORATION

NOV 14 1966

# MEN UNAFRAID

FOUR PIONEERS OF PROPHECY

*A Study of*  
AMOS, HOSEA, ISAIAH,  
AND THE HERALD OF  
THE RESTORATION

“Men divinely taught,  
And better teaching, in their majestic, unaffected style,  
The solid rules of civil government than all the orators  
of Greece and Rome.”—Milton.

BY  
ROLLIN H. WALKER



THE METHODIST BOOK CONCERN  
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TO MY UNCLE  
WILLIAM R. WALKER  
WHO HAS BEEN IN THE PLACE OF A FATHER  
TO ME FOR MANY YEARS



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## PREFACE

After one has caught the vision of the greatness of the Hebrew prophets all his attempts to expound them seem to him like an attempt to render the oratorio of "The Messiah" with "the vile squealing of the wry-neck't fife." When he is done he feels an impulse to look around for a priest to confess his sins.

The hope of the writer is that the young people who read this book may catch something of the enthusiasm that glows through its imperfections, and may supplement it by their ready and vivid imaginations. Then they, too, in turn, will know what it means to feel more than they can express and, like dumb Zacharias, will be able only to make signs that they have seen a vision.

But this vision of the greatness of the prophets will only come after patient reading and rereading of their words. The only way to get the real inspiration that comes from the study of these ancient seers is to become a little like them in their invincible concentration of mind. A class that plans merely to take a hasty glance at Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah is doomed to disappointment. That would be like a hurried attempt to build a bonfire out of a deeply lying coal mine. The prophets are not pine boxes for kindling wood; they are

unmined anthracite. But any young person who wishes to lay in fuel for the winter storms of life, and to get help for the stern tasks of reform and social betterment, will find in them enough coal for all his needs. There is enough fuel in the Hebrew prophets to heat the furnaces of eloquence for a thousand years.

I am under much obligation to the little group of teachers of the English Bible with whom I have the honor of working day by day. In particular, Miss Goldie McCue has made valuable suggestions which I have been glad to accept.

## TO THE TEACHER

The one task of the teacher is to devise means to keep his class reading and rereading the Biblical text in search for the ideas which the prophets themselves were most anxious to impress. The commonest snare into which a Bible teacher falls is the snare of giving a course *about* the Bible rather than *in* the Bible. But sustained enthusiasm is secured by bringing the class into direct contact with the great writers themselves.

The Search Questions on the Biblical Text which follow each section of this book are designed for this purpose. They are constructed on a plan that has been found successful with many hundreds of students. *The teacher who does not use the Search Questions as lesson assignments will miss the best contribution of this book towards keeping up interest in the study of the prophets.* References to chapters are usually given in order that the student may not be sent on too long and discouraging a hunt, but the verses are not given in order that he may have an opportunity to exercise his discrimination.

The teacher will often find it advantageous to use the Search Questions as a program for the class discussion. They are arranged with a definite outline of classroom work in mind. Often, however, the teacher will wish to give the class a chance to answer the Search Questions rapidly, and then to pursue his own way afterward. In many of the lessons there are more questions

than the average student can be persuaded to look up. In these cases it will be wise to hand out some of the questions at the close of the previous lesson as special assignments to individual members of the class. In this way all of them can be covered. Students should be told that in case they cannot do both, it is much better to look up the answers to the Search Questions than to read the lesson discussion. The reading matter in this book is meant to be simply a tonic to increase the student's appetite for the reading of the prophets themselves.

Certain parts of the book will be found somewhat difficult for young people, but it will be noticed that the questions in the lesson assignments are carefully adapted to them, and an enthusiastic teacher will be able to inspire even the younger members of the class to find out for themselves by independent study the answers to most of the questions.

Some teachers would doubtless have preferred that the writer had ignored the results of the modern scientific scrutiny of the Bible. But such a course is fraught with great peril to the faith of the rising generation. If we who believe in the Bible do not take these matters up with them someone who does not believe in the Bible will. Scientists tell us that certain disease germs feebly developed under unfavorable conditions, like a low temperature, gradually weaken in their destructive power, and finally become vaccines against the disease. On the basis of long experience in the classroom laboratory the writer is certain that the germs of Biblical criticism, which have been developed in this book



under the "detrimental environment" of a vivid sense of God, are vaccines that tend to render the student immune to that destructive criticism which has been such a blight to the church.

The teacher should constantly encourage the class to bring in analogies to modern literature. A quotation, for instance, from one of Whittier's anti-slavery poems, would enrich the discussion of Amos' words against selling the needy for a pair of shoes.

The method pursued by the teacher must be determined by the nature of the class and the number of meetings that can be given to the work. The lists of Search Questions on the Biblical Text are fifteen in number. If for any reason it seems impracticable to try to hold the class together for more than say eight sessions, it is suggested that the class attempt to cover the lessons on Amos and Isaiah, omitting "Isaiah's Diagnosis of the Conditions in Judah at the Beginning of His Ministry" in view of the fact that they are so very similar to those which Amos described in northern Israel.

An enlarged outline of the map found on page 164, and also of the chronological table on page 13, will be a help to the teacher if they are kept hanging before the eyes of the class. Some member of the class is usually willing and able to produce such helps quite successfully.

Little dramas of about fifteen minutes in length have been prepared on each of the prophets studied in this book, and issued by the same publishers under the title "Fearless Men." It will add to the enthu-

siasm of the class if the students are preparing to present them while they are studying this course.

## LITERATURE

A full list of the literature can be found in the Bible dictionaries. The following will be helpful for general use:

### AMOS AND HOSEA

- Driver, S. R.—Joel and Amos, The Cambridge Bible; New York: Macmillan. The most usable popular commentary on Amos.
- Eiselen, F. C.—The Minor Prophets, Whedon's Commentary; New York: Methodist Book Concern.
- Smith, J. M. P.—Amos, Hosea and Micah, The Bible for Home and Schools; New York: Macmillan.
- Smith, George Adam—The Book of the Twelve Prophets, Vol. I, The Expositor's Bible; New York: Doran.

### ISAIAH

- Skinner, J.—Isaiah, The Cambridge Bible; New York: Macmillan.
- McFadyen, J. E.—The Book of the Prophecies of Isaiah, The Bible for Home and Schools; New York: Macmillan.
- Smith, George Adam—Isaiah, The Expositor's Bible; New York: Doran.

For a general survey of the prophets discussed in this book, "The Beacon Lights of Prophecy," by Professor A. C. Knudson (New York: Methodist Book Concern), is helpful.

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

B. C.	
765-745?	Prophecies of Amos.
750-736?	Prophecies of Hosea.
745	Accession of Tiglath-pileser and the renewal of Assyrian ascendancy.
740	Death of Uzziah, king of Judah, and call of Isaiah.
735	Invasion of Judah by Damascus and Israel.
721	Capture of Samaria, chief city of Israel, by the Assyrians.
701	Invasion of Judah by the Assyrians under Sennacherib.
607	The Fall of Nineveh, and the end of Assyrian domination.
604-561	Reign of Nebuchadnezzar, of Babylon.
586	Fall of Jerusalem and the beginning of the Exile.
538	Cyrus, the Median, captures Babylon.



## WHY STUDY THE PROPHETS

A college student with no pronounced interest at the beginning of a survey of the prophets later surprised the teacher by saying, "The value of this course is the light it sheds on the *now*." And then, looking up into the face of the teacher, he asked with sudden emotion, "Do you believe the United States can continue to exist if we go on as we are doing?" The prophets had done their work with the lad. He was right in feeling that when these men said the things that were true in their own day they were saying also the things that always had been true and always will be true.

The prophets saw with unusual clearness the conditions of their own time, and announced the eternal principles of divine providence which would operate whenever those conditions were present. Like great chemists in the laboratory of life, they discovered for all time that the combination of certain social elements under certain conditions would bring about certain inevitable results in human life. Given, for instance, at any time in the world's history highly centralized wealth in the hands of a godless and unprincipled few, a discouraged and discontented working class, and a formal and paganized religion, and we have a high social explosive as certain as TNT, and far more deadly. If we really understand these ancient seers in the light of their historical situation, and if we take the trouble to know our

own day, we can have the word of God for our generation.

But this is not the only advantage from the study of the prophets. Back of the prophetic message stands a great personality. If we but pay the price of intellectual effort we can soon see the bronzed glow in their cheeks, catch the glint of their eyes, see the furtive smiles and tears that play across their sensitive countenances, and at last add them as personal friends to the group of those we love.

As we come to know these men something of their spirit will become our own. Our thinking will become more vital, our imagination more active, our speech more impressive, our championship of the oppressed more vigorous, and our sense of God in human life more real. Furthermore, the example of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah will make us brave to face the disapproval of the majority and keep us from discouragement when the current goes against us. Finally, as the result of our study of the great divine process leading up to Jesus, his position in history will seem more august and assured, and his teachings more luminous and suggestive.

AMOS



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AMOS



## THE TIMES OF AMOS

### POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

At the very beginning of our study it should be said that the Hebrew prophets are not exactly what one might call eating apples, but they are famous cooking apples. Apply the heat to them by laboriously working your way back into the historical situation, simmer them on the fires of meditation, and they will become great sources of inspiration and helpfulness.

We must therefore ask the reader to go back with us to the eighth century before Christ and learn something of the conditions which Amos faced. After the death of Solomon the ten northern tribes of Israel revolted under Jeroboam, and thereafter for over two hundred years, until they were carried away captive in 721, there were two separate kingdoms, the kingdom of Judah in the south and the kingdom of Israel in the north. Jeroboam the Second, in whose reign Amos prophesied, ruled Israel from about 782 to 741. He was a great conqueror. The borders of Israel had been extended to the boundaries which had been laid out by the enthusiasm of the prophet Jonah (2 Kings 14. 25), and men might well say in the face of all this prosperity that God was indeed with Israel, that theirs was the age to which the seers had pointed, and that the high tide of divine favor had now set in.

It is likely that if a modern tourist, with an eye for the esthetic rather than the moral aspects of life, could

have visited Israel at this time, he would have sent back a glowing account of its splendid civilization. Life was full of the beautiful. The country was dotted with palaces. Men decorated their abodes with ivory; they invented "for themselves instruments of music, like David"; they lived "at ease in Zion" (6. 1, 4, 5).

But the prophet Amos, coming to these self-satisfied and ease-loving people, looked beneath the surface of this outward magnificence and saw the corruption of their inner life. Every crime against which the merciful land laws of Israel sought to guard seems to have been in vogue. Wealth was centralized. Men stored up violence and robbery in their palaces (3. 10), and the natural result followed. Ease soon degenerated into corruption. Society was rotten at the top. They drank wine not in wine glasses, but in big bowls (6. 6). The fashionable women were coarse and drunken, and the prophet reminded them that in spite of their elegant attire and fine ways they were living low, animal lives. He addressed them roughly as "kine of Bashan" (4. 1), or, as we would say, "fat Durham cows." Imagine such a word from a fashionable modern pulpit!

The rich nobles were evidently dominant in the time of Jeroboam II. It is likely that this ascendancy was partially due to the great monarch's military program. While the common people fought for their country, shrewd nobles at home devoured their living. The wretchedness of the poor may also have been due in a measure to the drouths, insect ravages and pestilences through which the nation had recently passed (4. 6-11). Such times have ever been a supreme opportunity for

the wealthy to swallow up the possessions of the poor. (Compare Genesis 47. 13-26.) The method of the modern monopoly had already been learned, and the poor were forced to buy the refuse of the wheat at exorbitant prices (8. 4-6).

In spite of the strong hand of Jeroboam there were not a few uprisings among the common people (3. 9, 10). These were doubtless speedily suppressed, but the prophet saw in them signs that the day of reckoning was at hand. He of course knew that a soldiery which must be recruited from the peasant class could not be counted on to fight with spirit for a government that oppressed them; and he knew that even if they would fight, a drunken and licentious nobility could never lead them to victory. And yet for the time being, things seemed to be going very well. A recent misfortune of Damascus, their great rival, at the hands of Assyria had made the prosperity of Israel all the greater. It was similar to the prosperity that America enjoyed during the European war.

#### RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS

From various references in the prophecy we plainly see that the religious ceremonies were elaborate. The rude prophet from the south seemed out of harmony in their midst (7. 12). The worship of Jehovah was enriched with music (5. 23). Men were so enthusiastic in their religious zeal that they far exceeded the demands of the law, and brought their sacrifices every morning and their tithes every three days (4. 4, 5). It is likely that the priests used the ancient and beauti-

ful forms of worship just as many a fashionable congregation clings to the time-honored and sacred formularies of the church. And doubtless many of them were conscientious. As usual where there is a state religion, the priests were the champions of the rulers who were responsible for the bad social conditions among the people (7. 10-12). And there are dark hints that the places of worship had become places of gross immorality (2. 7, 8). As Davidson says, they were "worshiping Jehovah after a heathenish fashion."

Prophecy of the true sort was distasteful to the people (2. 11, 12). Youthful enthusiasm that felt the stirrings of the Divine fire was smothered out by popular disapproval. The young Nazirites who, in protest against the prevailing luxury and vice, gave themselves to stern self-denial like modern athletes in training, were ridiculed and surrounded by enticements to drink. And although men scrupulously observed the Sabbath and other holy days, such times were a weariness to them, for they kept saying, "When will the new moon be gone that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small and the shekel great, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit?" (8. 4-6.)

There was much cant in the conversation of the people. They said sanctimoniously, "The Lord is with us" (5. 14). They professed to be longing for the day when Jehovah would come and vindicate his righteous cause (5. 18), but they always thought of this "day of the Lord" as a time of increased prosperity for themselves and vengeance upon their enemies, and

never as a time when justice should "roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (5. 24).

### SEARCH QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

1. What does the book of Kings tell us concerning the character and exploits of Jeroboam the Second, who was king of Israel in the times of Amos? See 2 Kings 14. 23-29.

(Many students who desire to see the times of Amos in their relation to the general course of Jewish history will be glad to begin at the first chapter of the book of Kings and read the first fourteen chapters.)

2. What light upon the moral condition of the surrounding heathen nations do we get from Amos' indictment of them in 1. 1 to 2. 3?

3. Where in Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 have we plain evidence that in the times of Amos the poor suffered bitter injustice and oppression?

4. What indication do we find in Chapter 2 that this oppression of the poor was causing them to begin to rise in protesting mobs and disorder?

5. Where in Chapters 3 and 6 do we find evidence that the rich lived in idle and selfish luxury on their ill-gotten gains?

6. Where in Chapter 6 are we told that the rich would not believe that punishment was coming upon them for their sins?

7. Where in Chapter 4 do we find rough words addressed to the fashionable ladies of Samaria which indicate that they were leading low, animal lives, and by reason of their demands upon their husbands were at least partly responsible for the oppression of the poor?

8. We find in Chapter 3 what evidence of gross social vice among the people, and that this vice was practiced even in the precincts of the sanctuaries?

9. What evidence do we find in Chapters 4 and 5 that in spite of all this immorality the people were fastidious in the observance of the outward forms of worship, and liberal in their gifts to religion?

10. What indication do you find in Chapters 2, 5, and 7 that the age was one which opposed the prophet and the reformer, and discouraged the Nazirite who gave himself to the simple and abstemious life?

11. To what modern conditions would Amos' words concerning the oppression of the poor be applicable? A slight change in the form

of these words often makes them very vivid portrayals of prevailing conditions.

12. Of what modern conditions does Amos' description of the hollow religious formalism of his day remind you?

13. Do you know of any modern instance where oppression of the poor and immoral greed have been associated with a fever of religious activity and zeal?

## AMOS THE MAN

### HIS CALL

Amos is especially interesting to us because he is the first of the prophets whose message has come down to us in written form. And the fact that his prophecy is held in honor after these twenty-eight hundred years makes us eager to know something about the man.

He tells us himself that he was a herdsman of Tekoa, a little place about six miles southeast of Jerusalem, in a rocky region overlooking the valley of the Dead Sea. In his book we find many illustrations which betray the eye of the man who is accustomed to follow the flock. He says, for instance, that the fate of Israel shall be as when "the shepherd rescueth out of the mouth of the lion two legs or a piece of an ear" (3. 12). This herdsman of Judah became a foreign missionary, for he was a prophet to the people of Israel, the northern kingdom.

We have no definite description of the call of Amos, but from his own words we know that it was of overpowering intensity. He was driven to his task by his conviction as a cannon ball is driven from a cannon. His message of doom was so unwelcome to Israel, and seemed to them so preposterous, that they would of course constantly call it in question; and he needed to have, like Saul of Tarsus, an experience of unquestionable authority. The force that carried him along was so overwhelming that he thought everybody ought to

recognize it as a divine power. Do you think, he seems to say, that I would bring you this offensive message that keeps me in constant battle with you if there was not back of it the urge of God himself? "The Lord Jehovah hath spoken; who can but prophesy?" (3. 8.)

In reply to the skepticism of the crowds as to his divine authority Amos asked them a series of questions: "Shall two walk together, except they have agreed? Will a lion roar in the forest when he hath no prey? Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth where no gin is set for him?" In these uneasy times, when everyone fears an inroad, will the sudden wild blare of the trumpet be heard in a city and not cause the people to shudder? Will calamity come upon a town save by the permission of Jehovah (3. 3-6)? Nothing happens without a cause, and every cause has its sure effect. Can you not see, he seems to say, the sins that cry for judgment, and the judgments that proclaim the disapproval of God? You ask for the proof of my call. For a man who believes in a good and just God *everything he sees* is a call to proclaim the coming punishment.

Amos called out dramatically for the nobles from heathen cities to come and look down upon Samaria, and behold what tumults and oppressions were therein (3. 9)! Even a heathen, he suggests, would see that judgment must come upon Israel. It did not require the insight of a prophet. Every time he looked at a group of despairing and plundered peasants this sight said in loudest tones, They will not fight against the foreign invader, for they have nothing to fight for. And every time he beheld the drunken and effeminate



nobles their faces showed him unmistakably that if a foreign invader should come they would not be able to lead the people against him. He knew instinctively that God always has a flock of vultures for such a decaying condition. Just as soon as Amos sensed the designs of the great and powerful Assyrian empire upon western Asia he saw that the coming of the doom was inevitable. And he said to the people, I am simply calling attention to what God is saying in all your ears if only you would listen. All voices, those which whisper in my inner soul and those which clamor like a fire-bell in all that I see in the world about me, unite to speak one mighty word of God—doom!

Of course the prophet hoped for some extraordinary repentance of Israel that would lead to a supernatural deliverance. That this repentance might be brought about was the aim and object of his startling prophecy. But if the people continued as they were he thought that anyone ought to see the inevitable result. In this feeling that the truth he proclaimed ought to be perfectly obvious to the people, he was like Jesus, who said: "Ye know how to interpret the face of the earth and the heaven; but how is it that ye know not how to interpret this time? And why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right" (Luke 12. 56, 57)? The wonder to Amos was not that he could see the impending invasion, but that the people were blind to it.

#### AMOS AND THE HIGH PRIEST

When Amos went up to the great sanctuary at Beth-el and, among the crowds of pilgrims that doubtless were

assembled there, began to tell them of his visions of coming wrath, Amaziah, the chief priest, said unto him: "O thou seer, go, flee thou away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: but prophesy not again any more at Beth-el, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house" (7. 12, 13). If Amos had not been getting a following Amaziah would scarcely have taken the trouble to rebuke him. Perhaps the temple offering was beginning to fall off. The high priest, like the other priests and prophets of his day, was mercenary, and he could conceive of no other motive for Amos' preaching than the desire for gain. So he addressed him as though he were a common street fakir who wished to attract a crowd and gather some money, and he told him that the sanctuary at Beth-el was no place for such wandering creatures. Amos resented the insinuation that he was a mere hireling. "I was no prophet," said he, "neither was I a prophet's son." That is, I was not trained in the prophetic guilds; I have no connection with them. "Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel" (7. 14, 15). Doubtless the prophets of that day were not in good standing with the common people as sincere and unselfish men, and Amos did not want to have his message discounted by having a "Reverend" before his name. Furthermore, he was not a trained prophet, but only a herdsman propelled by the divine thrusting on, and he wanted to stand in his true character.

## WATCHFUL EXPECTANCY

At the root of Amos' prophetic conviction we find this great assumption, "Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing, except he reveal his secret unto his servants the prophets" (3. 7). He believed in a God of love who minutely and tenderly cares for his people. If a man will tell a friend whatever would be good for him to know, much more, thought Amos, will the good Father in heaven continually reveal himself to those who are listening for his message. More than this, Amos believed that God would reveal himself in plain and simple ways. He assumed that divine ingenuity was being exhausted in the attempt of Jehovah to make himself known to the people. All that God *did* was to Amos the word of God. And this assurance that the word of God is found not in the exceptional alone, but also in the ordinary, tended to make him a veritable incarnation of sagacity and common sense.

But while Amos dwelt upon the obvious in religion and in morals, there is nevertheless about him a great element of mystery. The prevailing religious conceptions of the times were the shallowest and the most perverted. And yet here is this marvelous creative genius, the very mouthpiece of God. How did this humble shepherd succeed in thinking so deeply and so solidly, and in laying a foundation so broad and so deep that when Jesus came after the long centuries he could build upon it the everlasting and heaven-reaching structure of his gospel? The most natural explanation is that which the ages have given: Amos was inspired of God.

## HOW AMOS WAS EDUCATED

But this assertion that Amos was inspired by God is taken by some to mean that his mind did not work according to ordinary laws and that he did not fulfill ordinary conditions for mental growth. This, however, is far from the truth. His insight did not come in one great flash. Amos was doubtless a man of most extraordinary mental concentration. The ancient prophets were not diverted by the thousand interruptions that tend to keep the modern mind in a state of scattering confusion. The artificial light which makes possible to us so much desultory and profitless amusement was denied them, and they were forced to spend their evenings out under the open sky in wonder and in worship. They spent many long hours in that meditation which Ian Maclaren says is a lost art.

Then, too, Amos, like all of the prophets, received constant inspiration from nature. Whenever his attention was especially attracted to some natural object he seemed to hear God saying, "Amos, what seest thou?" Scientifically he knew vastly less about nature than the modern man of education, but he was doubtless much more awed by it. Nature was to him a reminder and a revealer of the thought of God, a sacrament of his truth.

One of the chief explanations of Amos' insight is found in his habit of prayer. He does not obtrude upon us the fact that he lived a life of prayer, but it shines out through his prophecy. He prayed against the doom that he pronounced. He centered his mind intensely and painfully upon the needs and sufferings

of the downtrodden and the outraged (8. 4-7), and the burden of their woe became so great that he was driven to avail himself to the full of the inspiration and the light of God.

And then Amos was supremely brave and self-sacrificing in the utterance of his message. And the courage with which, even at the risk of his life, he instantly proclaimed the convictions that came to him opened his mind to floods of new truth. As he was bravely loyal to the one talent of truth that was given to him, God rewarded him by giving him ten talents. His eye was "single," and therefore, according to the promise, his "whole body was full of light."

Furthermore, the prophet insisted on looking at life as a whole. He would not be a narrow provincial Judæan, but bore the burden of the woes and the sins of all the surrounding peoples with whom he was acquainted. He seems to have been chemically pure from Jewish arrogance. He even hears the Lord asking, "Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel" (9. 7)? Or, as we would put it, You and a Negro look both alike to God. Again he hears Jehovah saying, "Have not I brought up . . . the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir" (9. 7)? God's merciful hand has been in the migrations of all the peoples, not merely in the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. By this insistence that nothing human should be foreign to him, Amos opened the windows of his soul to floods of heavenly light and sanity.

### WAS AMOS UNSYMPATHETIC?

Some people find no expressions of sympathy in the prophecy of Amos, and they say he must have been a man of harsh and unloving nature. But because a surgeon does not weep over his patient is no sign that he is not tender. Indeed a man is never heroic and unselfish without love. It is not unlikely that the prophet's temperament was somewhat stern, but there were flowers growing over the granite ledge. It should always be remembered that one of the chief springs and motives of Amos' denunciations was his indignation over the oppression of the poor. If he had a tongue like a whip for the oppressor, it spoke out of a heart of love for the oppressed. He was fierce because he was loving. We may say of him as Whittier said of another:

Not for thyself, but for the slave  
 Thy words of thunder shook the world;  
 No selfish griefs or hatred gave  
 The strength wherewith thy bolts were hurled.

From lips that Sinai's trumpet blew  
 We heard a tender under song;  
 Thy very wrath from pity grew,  
 From love of man thy hate of wrong.

The nation had drunk deep of the opiate of sin, and Amos conceived it to be his part to shout in its ears and handle it with that same roughness which men use to waken a loved one out of the stupor produced by a drug. His prophecy is molten metal heated in the furnace of pity.

**SEARCH QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT**

1. What do you learn from Chapter 1 as to where Amos lived? Was this town in Judah or in northern Israel?

2. What evidence can you find in Chapter 7 as to Amos' way of earning a livelihood? Having found this passage, find a passage in Chapter 3 where the figures of speech which he uses would be natural to one of such an occupation.

3. Where in Chapter 2 do you find evidence that the prophet was thrilled by the great hero tales of Israel's conquest of Palestine?

4. In what words in Chapter 3 does Amos show that he lived in perfect confidence that God would reveal to sensitive and eager souls what he was intending to do in the world? Compare John 16. 12, 13, for Jesus' assurance to his disciples that they likewise need not be taken by surprise, but could be prepared for things to come.

5. Where in Chapter 3 do you find evidence that Amos believed that God's world was a place where nothing happened by chance, and where what God did was to be interpreted by wise and eager men as the voice of God? Do you think Amos' call came only from an inner impression, or also from observing the happenings around him?

6. See Luke 12. 54-56 for a passage in which Jesus also suggests that outward events and tendencies are voices of God which should be heeded and understood by all sincere men.

7. Where in Chapter 3 do you find the suggestion that Amos' call to proclaim the word of God had come with a powerful intensity?

8. Where in Chapter 3 do we hear the prophet suggest that while his commission to speak had come overpoweringly, really the conditions against which he was called to protest seemed so obviously bad that he thought even the people of the heathen Philistine cities ought to see that something dreadful must happen to Israel?

9. Can you imagine anything that might account for the bitterness of Amos' reference to the way in which young prophets were discouraged in Israel?

10. Where in Chapter 7 do you find indications that Amos came into collision with the high priests, and that they evidently regarded him with contempt as a dangerous fanatic who was seeking to eke out a living by his prophecies? For a parallel encounter in the life of Jesus see Luke 20. 1-20.

11. Where in Chapter 7 do you find indications that Amos did not wish to be classified with the mere professional prophets of his country, but rather wanted to be known as a common, hard-working

man who had been impelled by the burning conviction within him to speak the word of God to the people?

12. Some great scholars say that Amos was a man of cold and unsympathetic temper.

(1) What evidence do you find in Chapter 7 that Amos, instead of taking a fierce delight in pronouncing doom upon the people, was accustomed to pray piteously to God to avert the disasters which he foresaw?

(2) Can you find evidence in Chapter 6 that Amos even considered it a sin not to mourn over the troubles of the poor and distressed people of the land?

(3) What is the cause of his fierce wrath? insults to himself personally, or wrongs done to the peasants?

(4) When a man flames with wrath because the poor man is turned away from his just due, is it right to call him unsympathetic and hard?

13. What indication do you find in Chapter 9 that Amos was singularly free from the racial arrogance of the Jews, and believed that God's merciful hand had been in the history of the other nations?

14. What evidence do you find in the first part of the prophecy that Amos had an international outlook and felt called upon to utter prophecies concerning the future not merely of his own country, but also of all the nations round about?

15. What evidence do you find in the book that Amos had a very vivid imagination, and knew how to express himself with picturesque force?



## THE MESSAGE OF AMOS

“Is not my word like fire? saith Jehovah; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?”—*Jeremiah 23. 29.*

The prophecy of Amos was uttered “two years before the earthquake” (1. 1). Anyone can preach about a calamity standing upon the ruins, but it takes a prophet to proclaim it while the flowers are blooming and all the people are in gala attire. Amos did for his day exactly what a prophet of 1900 would have done if, in the heyday of prosperity that men were then rejoicing in, he had proclaimed with burning certitude the awful calamity of the World War. He deemed it to be his task to tell why the calamity was coming upon the people, and what they might do to avert it.

He began by taking up one by one the nations bordering upon Israel, and pointing out the sins for which they were to be punished. It is noticeable that he did not rebuke them for failure to obey the Jewish law which they did not know, but for sins of inhumanity against which the conscience of any savage would normally revolt. Mostly they were to be condemned for cruelty in time of victory, and that not merely after victories over Israel but over one another. Moab, for instance, was condemned for atrocities committed against Edom, Israel's worst enemy. In this Amos shows his impartial attitude and makes good his claim to be a spokesman for God. The modern, of course, would say that the memories of these ancient wrongs

committed against one another made the tribes of western Asia, like the tribes of the Balkans to-day, incapable of co-operating in time of danger, and thus assured their defeat. But the prophet after his more religious and vital fashion emphasizes the direct hand of God in the coming punishment.

For Amos to begin with these denunciations of woe upon the surrounding nations was very tactful, and doubtless the audience responded with fervent Amens. When he turned to Israel, however, his message was startling and unexpected. "Hear this word that Jehovah hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities" (3. 1, 2). One of the most significant "therefores" in history, that! His hearers expected him to say, Therefore will I be lenient with your sins. But Amos takes the position of Jesus, "To whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required" (Luke 12. 48). This principle is one of the fundamental presuppositions of Amos' prophecy.

Amos had a thrilled sense of Israel's mighty past and of the great mercies of Jehovah toward his people. "Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath" (2. 9). And to the mind of Amos God's great deliverance in the past made their present disloyalty seem all the worse.

The heart of Amos' indictment of the nation is his

condemnation of inhumanity. They "buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes" (8. 6). They "trample upon the poor, and take exactions from him of wheat" (5. 11). Or, as we would say, they corner the wheat market. "They turn aside the needy in the gate from their right" (5. 12), that is, they corrupt the courts. They turn "justice into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood" (6. 12). The priests were very much more afraid of neglecting the appropriate sacrifices than they were of overlooking justice and kindness. But Amos insisted that "to do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to Jehovah than sacrifice" (Proverbs 21. 3). He knew that the one fatal sin of the people was to be found in the greed of its ruling classes and their indifference to the sufferings of the poor. A profiteer, from Amos' point of view, seemed a far more dangerous man than a thrower of bombs. The extreme luxury of the rich, in view of the oppression which it cost, was criminal in his sight; and he deemed the fashionable ladies of Samaria quite as guilty as their lords, because by their demands they well-nigh forced them to make greater extortions. This ancient message seems like a special dispatch to the luxurious life of our own day, for everyone knows the close relation between the wife's costly demands for fashion and show and the husband's temptation to become a profiteer.

If there was one thing that made Amos fiercer than the oppression of the poor it was the hollow, formal worship of Jehovah practiced at Beth-el and Gilgal. If they had been indulging in their brutal inhumanity

and not at the same time making a pretense of Jehovah-worship, they would have known that they were a godless nation. But they stupefied their consciences by being all the more zealous in their worship. Amos called out ironically: "Come to Beth-el, and transgress; to Gilgal, and multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes every three days; . . . for this pleaseth you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah" (4. 4, 5). In his wrath against the priests who were responsible for this condition Amos resembles Jesus in his fierce words against the Pharisees and Sadducees, who devoured widows' houses and for a pretense made long prayers. One of the final visions of Amos is a dream wherein he sees the people gathered together in the temple, and hears God command his angel to break in the roof upon them that they all might be slain (9. 1).

This picture of future doom grows out of his sense of the sure enforcement of the moral law. Amos felt that a man could not get away from it any more than he could run away from his skeleton. How vividly he expressed this! "As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him" (5. 19). Hear his picturesque words: "Though they dig into Sheol, thence shall my hand take them; and though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down. And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and it shall bite

them" (9. 2, 3). To Amos the moral law was as incapable as the law of gravitation.

We wonder that in that early day Amos was able to see deeply enough into the laws of life to realize that there was a close connection between the materialism of the people and the dying out of the fires of prophecy. They said to their prophets, Prophecy not! and they impatiently wished for the end of the Sabbath day so that they could plunge again into their mad quest for money. And the outcome, says Amos, will be exactly fitted to their sin. He warns them that a time is coming when they will gladly give all their gold if they may only have again the comfort and guidance of a man of God. But it will be too late. There will be a famine "of hearing the words of Jehovah. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of Jehovah, and shall not find it" (8. 12).

The circle of spiritual illumination which Christianity has drawn is much wider than that which we see in the prophet Amos, but the circle of Amos is still in the center. To Amos religion without righteousness was inconceivable. To seek God was to seek good. And that, of course, was the message of Jesus. Amos' message as over against that of Jesus is like a rough charcoal sketch compared with a rich hued and glorious landscape in oil. The wonder is, however, that when the great Painter came he needed to make so little change in Amos' drawing. The outline was correct. He only needed to add, and scarcely at all to alter. The world will never get away from the great fact that the

very essence of religion is justice and humanity, and from the fact that all religious worship which is divorced from a decent life is an abomination in the sight of God. The gospel is and forever will be founded upon the principles which Amos laid down. History is increasingly proving him to be right, and every time the clock strikes in the steeple it registers the passing of an hour in which the logic of events has added one more proof of the eternal rightness of his message.

### SEARCH QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

1. The prophet pronounces doom upon the surrounding nations not because they did not offer sacrifices according to the Jewish law, but because they had committed moral outrages that the universal conscience condemns. What is the nature of these outrages? See 1. 1 to 2. 3.

2. Where in Chapter 9 does the prophet say that God looks upon all races and nations alike as his children, and thus suggests that Israel need look for no special leniency? Compare Jesus in Matthew 8. 5-13.

3. Where in Chapter 3 does he even insist that the special privileges of Israel mean special responsibility, and that their sins will be visited upon them all the more severely?

4. In what words in Chapter 3 does the prophet, in order to make their ingratitude seem more blameworthy, remind Israel of the great things God has done for them in the past?

5. Where in Chapter 4 does the prophet show that the sin of Israel is all the more serious because the nation has hardened itself against the afflictions that were sent to remind them of their helplessness and graciously to influence them to return to God?

6. Find the places where the prophet predicts punishment for Israel on account of injustice and oppression. This is the very heart of his message.

7. What in Chapter 4 is the message of Amos to the rich ladies of Samaria?

8. Where in Chapters 3, 4, and 6 does Amos show that oppression of the poor rouses him to all the greater wrath because it is associated

with such luxury on the part of the ruling class? Compare Jesus in Luke 12. 13-21; 16. 19-31.

9. Where in Chapter 4 does the prophet ironically call the people to their worship at the sanctuaries in Beth-el and Gilgal, where they seek to make up for the lack of common honesty and decency by special zeal in sacrifice and offerings? Where in Chapter 5 does he plainly exhort them to keep away from these places? Compare Jesus' words to the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 23. 23-26 for a close analogy to Amos' attitude toward the corrupt religionists of his day.

10. Where in Chapter 9 does he see in a vision the destruction of heaven coming upon the people at the very time they were gathered in the temple engaged in the paganized worship of Jehovah?

11. Where in Chapter 8 does the prophet show that the materialism of the people and their gross misuse of the Sabbath will be punished by a scarcity of real men of God to give them comfort and guidance when the punishment comes upon them?

12. Where in Chapter 9 does the prophet with great vividness show how inescapable will be the judgment of Jehovah?

13. Do you find any other places where with unusual picturesqueness and dramatic power the prophet proclaims coming judgment?

14. When were Amos' words fulfilled? See 2 Kings 18. 9-12.

15. What modern applications can you justly make of Amos' words against oppression and a paganized worship of Jehovah?





# HOSEA



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## HOSEA

## THE TIMES OF HOSEA

I saw the ramparts of my native land,  
One time so strong, now dropping in decay,  
Their strength destroyed by this new age's way  
That has worn out and rotted what was grand.

—*Masefield.*

Certain books arrest us strongly on the first reading and then, after a time, cease to impress us. This is often the case with the “best sellers.” We soon throw them aside with a suggestion of nausea. Other books are rather dull at first but slowly grow upon us as we study them. Some are even positively forbidding at the first reading, and yet if we only persist they finally win our highest admiration. The prophet we now take up belongs to the latter class. When students pass from the study of Amos to the study of Hosea they always express a disappointment at the change. “Amos is clear,” they say, “but Hosea is a mess.” And yet, if they stay with him, Hosea wins them not only to admiration but to an ardent affection as though he had become their personal friend.

It is hardly to be expected that the full appreciation of Hosea can come within the brief time that it is possible to devote to him in this little book. But if we can catch a glimpse of his winsome personality we may be inspired to further study.

As in the case of Amos, we shall begin our study by considering the times of the prophet. First of all we need to realize that Hosea was a successor of Amos.

Amos had made a diagnosis of the moral disease from which the nation was suffering, and had predicted its results. He had done this at a time when Israel did not outwardly seem to be in a serious condition. When Hosea begins his ministry, however, all the symptoms have become aggravated, and the case is alarming. There is more than the hectic flush now; there is the sunken eye, the emaciated form, and at times the delirium of the fever.

The facts concerning Israel's state at this time are derived chiefly from two sources: the account in 2 Kings 14. 23 to 17. 6, and the revelation given in the words of Hosea himself. According to 2 Kings, when the powerful Jeroboam II died, the nation which he had held together by his strong hand fell into disorder. The confusion is reflected in the records. There is a great gap in the chronology. Assassin after assassin gained power, ruled a short time, and was then put to death. It was a day of outward chaos and unspeakable tragedy. Three times the Assyrians came up, devastated portions of the country and exacted tribute. At last Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, subjugated the land and afterward, finding the king rebellious, laid siege to Samaria. This siege was finally pushed to the bitter end by his successor, Sargon, in 722 or 721. And thus, as both Hosea and his predecessor Amos had foretold, the brief candle of the northern kingdom flickered out.

The book of Kings, however, gives us but the surface facts. When we come to the prophet himself we learn something of the conditions which lay back of the po-

litical anarchy, and which inevitably led to the extinction of the national life.

One of these causes was the lying diplomacy of the rulers. Like the statesmen before the World War, the rulers were continually multiplying (diplomatic) "lies and desolation." They made "a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried into Egypt" (12. 1). They attempted to convince both of these rival powers that they were allies, and this of course infuriated Assyria.

The nation had gone to pieces in its private life. The prophet exclaims: "There is nought but swearing and breaking faith, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery. They break out, and blood toucheth blood" (4. 2). One bloody deed follows upon another. Or to put it in modern language, lynchings and strikes and riots are incessant.

This condition was the more hopeless because the priests themselves, instead of being organized to save the people, were organized to keep them in sin. "They feed on the sin of my people and set their heart on their iniquity" (4. 8). They were like rich ecclesiastics in later years whose revenues depended on the profits from breweries or the rents from vile tenements.

Everywhere in the valleys altars had sprung up for the worship of the local Baals who were supposed to give good crops. The better the crops, the thicker the altars. "I will go after my lovers," said Israel, "that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink" (2. 5). Thus the idols got the credit for the mercies of God. This feeling that attention to the heathen deities would bring good for-

tune was analogous to the modern superstitions which have come down from ancient days that a horse-shoe over the barn door will bring good luck and that peas planted in a certain phase of the moon will prosper. The tendency to idolatry and superstition which had been taken over from the ancient Canaanitish inhabitants had infected the very soil just as the germs of foot rot in a pasture infect the sheep that are afterward turned into the lot.

In spite of the national weakness and decay there was still a mad self-confidence. "Ephraim said, Surely I am become rich, I have found me wealth: in all my labors they shall find in me no iniquity that were sin" (12. 8). He voted himself "a jolly good fellow." Doubtless, as is plainly hinted in the prophecy, the poor confused popular prophets ministered, like demagogues to-day, to this mad delusion of self-conceit.

Society was such that it was calculated to drive a sane man to madness. The sight of the sensitive prophet sobbing and well-nigh distracted in the presence of the nation's delirious dance of death will tell us better than any clear-cut and balanced sentences the conditions around him.

### SEARCH QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

1. According to 2 Kings 15. 1 to 16. 20, was Jeroboam, the king under whom Hosea began his ministry, succeeded by kings that held the people in order and maintained the strength of the kingdom, or was his strong reign followed by a period of anarchy with frequent assassinations and insurrections? According to these chapters, what finally became of Israel?

2. Do you find in Hosea 7, 8, 10, and 13 any hints of the transitory reigns of the kings, and of the general anarchy?

3. Where in Chapter 5 do you find evidence that the princes had gotten so low that instead of standing up for the rights of the people, they were like the depraved rascals who moved the stones and other familiar objects that formed the boundaries between the farms?

4. Find evidence in Chapter 7 that the princes of Israel were given over to drunkenness.

5. Where in Chapter 5 do we find indication that northern Israel (Ephraim) was going in its distress to the Assyrian king for help? Find Assyria on the map, with its capital Nineveh, and carefully distinguish it from the much smaller kingdom of Syria whose capital was Damascus.

6. What evidence do you find in Chapter 7 that Israel looked also to Egypt, Assyria's great rival, for help, and thus vacillated between the two and in its efforts to gain the favor of both was liable to excite their common resentment?

7. What indication is there in Chapters 8, 9, and 10 that the prophet himself, while certain that judgment was to come upon the people, was hardly sure whether this punishment would come in the form of devastation by Egypt or by Assyria?

8. Where in Chapters 4 and 10 do you find evidence that in Hosea's day men could no longer be depended on to keep their contracts and to tell the truth?

9. Where in Chapters 4 and 7 is there evidence that social vice was frightfully prevalent among the people?

10. What indications of anarchy and violence do we find in Chapters 4, 5, and 6?

11. What evidence do we find in Chapters 4, 5, 6, 11, and 13 that just as Hosea's wife had been unfaithful to him, so Israel had been unfaithful to Jehovah and had given herself to those gross forms of worship which the prophet calls whoredom?

12. Where in Chapter 5 do you find evidence that even when the people worshiped Jehovah they did it after a heathenish fashion, supposing that he would be won over by multitudes of sacrifices?

13. Where in Chapter 7 does the prophet say that when the people assembled to worship Jehovah it was merely for the sake of begging for good crops?

14. What are the indications in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 that the ministers of religion were largely responsible for this utter degeneracy of the people?

## HOSEA THE MAN

Our Hosea, the human,  
With his droppings of warm tears,  
And his touchings of things common  
Till they rose to meet the spheres.

—*Adapted from Mrs. Browning.*

The only direct information that we have concerning the personal life of Hosea is the statement that he gives us in the opening part of his prophecy: "When Jehovah spake at the first by Hosea, Jehovah said unto Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom; for the land doth commit great whoredom, departing from Jehovah" (1. 2).

The general interpretation of this passage to-day is that Hosea married a young woman whom he idealized after the manner of one of such a poetic and refined temperament; but that, infected with the general tendency of the times and perhaps under the influence of wine, she was led astray, and finally, wandering from his home, drifted into slavery. This awful tragedy in his own home opened his eyes and heart to realize how Jehovah must feel with the whole nation wandering away to the vile gods of the heathen. Thus he was led to conclude that this hard experience was permitted to come to him in order that he might sense the mind of God toward the people, and in retrospect, after the Hebrew fashion which ascribes all things to God, he said that Jehovah commanded him to take a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom. This interpre-



tation brings the prophecy in line with the experience of many a reformer who has been led to hate sin by having the consequences of some dreadful social evil reach its talons into his own home. After his suffering he comes to understand and to care.

The rest of our information about Hosea must be inferred from the nature of the book he has written. And the first superficial inference is that he must have been a man of incoherent mind, for the book has so little plan that Professor Moulton prints it merely as a series of detached sentences. But on repeated and continual reading this impression of incoherence disappears, for while it is wholly impossible to outline the book, the one practical purpose shines out from every paragraph, and there are very few sermons from which one could go with as definite a notion of the burden that is upon the heart of the preacher and of the thing that the preacher desires him to do. The book reminds us of a great ship in a tempest which seems to toss aimlessly, but nevertheless is plowing its way with strong power on its appointed track

The disconnectedness of the book arises from its intense emotion. As Davidson says, it is but little more than "a succession of sobs," and one does not sob out his firstlies and secondlies and thirdlies. It is like the diary of a soldier at the front that is written between the explosions of shells. The whole country, like Hosea's home, is in a chaotic condition, and the book is a reflection of the prophet's surroundings.

The most outstanding fact about Hosea is his intense sensitiveness. Like a radiophone he caught the music

of the spheres, but like the delicate seismograph that registers an earthquake in any part of the earth's surface his sensitive soul recorded the hidden and secret rumblings of divine judgment. This sensitiveness made him at the same time one of the gladdest and one of the saddest of men. He had drunk as deeply of the springs of joy as of the cup of woe.

His gladness is reflected in the thrilled joy in nature which is manifest throughout the book, in his enthusiasm for the great hero stories of the patriarchs and of the exodus, and in his upspringing joy in the certainty of the love of God. But out of these very things grew his sadness when he looked upon the tragedy of Israel's apostasy. He was like Dante, seeing heaven and hell at the same time. He had too many eyes. One moment he would rise like a lark to sing of hope in the heavens, and the next moment he would be pulled back fluttering to the earth by the dread realities of the sin of his people.

This sensitiveness accounts for another peculiarity of Hosea; his curious combination of tenderness and fierceness. His sense of the love of God made him very tender, and his sense of the way in which this love was outraged made him like a lion fierce for prey. The lightning flashed out of his tear-dimmed eyes. He flames like a volcano, and then appears like a delicate and fragrant lily. He pleads and threatens and weeps and soars into the heavens of idealism. His prophecy is a veritable flood, an avalanche of every type of human pleading and appeal. It is music and it is hailstones and coals of fire, a great soul in conflagration of

love and anxiety and terrific condemnation. What a miracle he is!

He is a pessimist and an optimist. He sees sin from the standpoint of God, and hence to our dull eyes he seems a pessimist. But at the same time he sees the sinner from the standpoint of God who loves immeasurably and whose resources of loving ingenuity will at length prevail for the salvation of his people. And thus he is a supreme optimist. He shudders at the sight of the black flock of vultures that are coming to devour the carcass of Israel, but he does not despair, for behind the vultures he sees a flight of angels coming to set up the new kingdom of God upon earth.

In the prophet's sympathy with God as he grieves over the sin of the people and yet loves them with unspeakable tenderness there is a foregleam of the spirit of Christ. The great thing about Hosea is that through the confused pages of his book you catch the dim outlines of the Christ bearing his cross, and you seem to hear the prayer, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

### SEARCH QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

1. There are three main interpretations of the first three chapters of Hosea: (1) the interpretation which makes Hosea literally obey a terrible command of Jehovah to marry a woman whom he knew to be immoral; (2) the interpretation which assumes that after his marriage Hosea discovered the unfaithfulness of his wife and made his domestic tragedy the medium through which he entered into an appreciation of Jehovah's feeling toward unfaithful Israel; (3) the interpretation which makes the story an allegory. To which interpretation do you personally incline?

2. What evidence do you find in Chapter 9 that Hosea, in addition to his own domestic trouble, was the victim of persecution?

3. Where have we in Chapter 12 evidence that Hosea, like Amos, thrilled over the ancient stories of Israel?

4. When a man senses the love of God for sinners it is always an evidence that he himself has a yearning pity for all who are going astray. In the light of this fact, where do we find in Chapters 11, 13, and 14 plain evidence that Hosea had a tender sympathy for Israel in her sin and folly?

5. What evidence do you find in Chapters 2, 11, and 14 that while Hosea was agonized by the sin of the people and their approaching doom, he was a man in whose heart a great hope was constantly springing up?

6. Can you find any evidence from the book that Hosea was an out-of-doors man in close touch with nature?

7. What passages do you find in Hosea that indicate that he had that power of vivid imagination and intense emotion which is characteristic of a genius?

8. It is one of the laws of the human mind that abundant figures of speech illustrating any given idea do not come without prolonged concentration on that thought. Where in Chapters 7, 10, 11, and 14 do you find that crowding together of images illustrating a single point that suggests that Hosea was a man of remarkable mental concentration?

## THE MESSAGE OF HOSEA

Through the lenses of his tears Hosea perhaps saw a little deeper than did his predecessors into the nature of sin, the love of God, and the way of salvation. It is not that he differed from them, but he went a little further in the same direction. After he had preached his sermon to the people he burst into tears and exclaimed, Ah, but you do not know how your sin hurts God, and you do not understand how terribly it has robbed you of all that is great and precious in your lives!

The note that we hear over and over again in Hosea is that sin has robbed the people of the power of moral appreciation. "Whoredom and wine," says he, have taken away "the understanding" (4. 11). They have killed the optic nerve of the soul. As we listen to him talk we almost fancy we hear a modern biologist lecturing on the way the organs of the body are withered up by disuse, like the eyes of the fish in Mammoth Cave.

The position which the prophet takes with regard to the nature of sin is directly contrary to that of the unthinking man who, persisting in a course of pleasing vice, pictures to himself a day after the holiday is ended when, having exhausted the pleasures of sin, he will repent and live soberly and righteously ever afterward. "But," says Hosea, "their doings will not suffer them to turn unto their God" (5. 4). When the nation begins to repent then it realizes that sin has entered into the

texture of the national life, and that it paralyzes their attempts to be good. They are like a "deceitful bow," says he (7. 16). When they pray they try to shoot the arrow at the mark of true religion and it goes astray.

The ancient world, like most moderns, considered punishment for sin as something inflicted from without, like the sentence of a judge who sends a man to jail. If the judge were a little more good-humored there would be no punishment at all. But Hosea says, "Judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field" (10.4). It grows spontaneously in the soil of the sinful nation like noxious weeds. Without their knowing it sin ages a nation and destroys its youthful spirit. "Gray hairs are here and there upon him, and he knoweth it not" (7. 9). It works secretly in the dark. It rots out the national life and character. "Therefore am I unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness" (5. 12).

Sin is contagious, and a man who is careless of what is going on among the people cannot expect to escape the results of it. "Like people," says the prophet, "like priest" (4. 9). The priests who refuse to do their duty will in no wise escape the punishment that is to come upon the people as a whole. The sin of the sanctuaries spreads through all the home life. The men enter licentiously into the orgies connected with the idol worship, and go home and find to their horror that their wives and their daughters have been guilty of the same vice (4. 14). Hosea, as though he were a modern physician, finds that when social impurity is

rife the nation becomes sterile. Whoredom and wine not only take away the heart; they also take away the population (9. 14).

The results of sin are like the power of gravity. The farther you fall the faster you go. "They sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (8. 7). Sin means captivity, for immorality means loss of national spirit and national unity. The enemies will come upon them in their helplessness and carry them away. Hosea realized that the very laws of nature stand grimly present in all societies with a set of handcuffs ready for the free people that turn away from righteousness.

To Hosea the greatest of all sins was unfaithfulness to Jehovah. He had seen that when men turned away from the worship of Jehovah and bowed down to the bull images and other personifications of the ferocious and brute powers of nature, their morality went down like a toboggan. The worship of the local divinities that were supposed to preside over the fair valleys of Israel was in Hosea's mind like the breaking of the marriage vows. The people called it simple prudence in the interest of good crops. They described it as freedom from narrowness and bigotry. But Hosea wanted to make them see the seriousness of idolatry, and he looked around for the nastiest name he could think of and called it whoredom.

Hosea's horror of sin sprang from his sense of the infinite love of God. He looked back in Jewish history and was thrilled with the great record of how Jehovah had been gracious to them all the years. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of

Egypt" (II. 1). He contemplated the way in which God through the long and tragic journey of the nation had drawn them through the miry ruts of their dullness and sensuality, laboring in his love like a draft horse. And he wondered at it. He heard Jehovah exclaim: "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that lift up the yoke on their jaws; and I laid food before them" (II. 4).

To Hosea the Jehovah from whom many of his ancestors had shrunk as the fierce sender of thunderbolts and wrath was the Father of infinite mercies. And yet his conception of God was not akin to the modern idea that makes God an indulgent parent, a kind of jolly Santa Claus of a deity. He avoided two extremes, the ancient extreme of picturing Jehovah as flaming wrath and the modern extreme of attributing to him a good-natured indifference to sin. God to him was love, but God was also a consuming fire.

He represents a conflict going on in the mind of God between his hatred of sin and his love of the sinner. God exclaims tenderly: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I cast thee off, Israel? . . . My heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger" (II. 8, 9). But then again, as he contemplates their ingratitude and their pride, Jehovah exclaims, "Therefore am I unto them as a lion; as a leopard will I watch by the way; I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps" (I3. 7, 8). This is not inconsistency. This is simply an attempt to portray that which must forever exist in the mind of a loving God,



unspeakable tenderness and unspeakable indignation over sin and ingratitude.

There can be no doubt that one of the next advances in religion will be the realization of the fact that just in proportion as we believe in the intensity of Jehovah's love for mankind, we must believe in the terribleness of his wrath against sin. There is a most impressive passage in Hosea which says that in the latter days men "shall come with fear unto Jehovah and to his goodness" (3. 5). They will have such an intense conception of his goodness *that it will cause them to tremble*. And when that new vision comes men will go back with renewed interest to Hosea as the prophet who in the olden time anticipated it and proclaimed it with such quivering emotion.

Hosea's conception of the way of salvation sprang out of his conception of God. It may be simply stated in that verse which the Saviour honored him by quoting: "I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings" (6. 6). Of course animal sacrifices were not necessary to propitiate a God who with unspeakable tenderness was yearning over the nation; but, of course, single-hearted loyalty to Jehovah and kindly dealing between man and man were indispensable. "Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep kindness and justice, and wait for thy God continually" (12. 6).

### SEARCH QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

1. The message of Hosea is divided into two very unequal main divisions: first, the section that tells of Hosea's private life and how he learned the mind of God from his own sorrows; second, Hosea's

message to Israel. Find from a reading of the book the chapters included in each of these two divisions.

2. Hosea taught that Israel's past history was full of manifestations of God's gracious and condescending love. Find passages in Chapters 2, 7, 11, 12, and 13 which illustrate this point.

3. Where in Chapters 2 and 13 does the prophet in his attempt to show that God at the same time tenderly yearns over the people and fiercely abhors their sins, seem almost in the same breath to say that God loves and hates them?

4. Hosea conceived that for Israel to turn away from their pure, kind, and glorious God to the worship of the brutal, sensuous, and immoral deities of the heathen was an act so vile that it could only be described by the repulsive name of whoredom. Where in Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, and 9 do you find passages expressing his horror and repulsion at the nation's sin?

5. Where in Chapter 4 does he tell us that as the result of the social vice and drunkenness that sprang out of the irreligion of the nation it was losing its moral sense?

6. Where in Chapter 4 does Hosea show that as a result of their own unfaithfulness to Jehovah and their connection with the licentious, idolatrous rites, the men had lost the right to condemn their daughters and their brides for their uncleanness?

7. Where in Chapters 4 and 9 does Hosea show that as a result of the prevailing social vice the people will cease to multiply and the population will shrink?

8. Where in Chapter 10 does the prophet tell us that the punishment of the nation that breaks its contracts comes so much out of the nature of things that it springs up all around them like weeds?

9. Where in Chapters 10 and 11 does the prophet say that the condition of Israel is so bad that restoration will not come until the country is devastated and the people led into captivity?

10. Where in Chapters 1 and 14 does Hosea tell us that the salvation of Israel is not to come from the building up of a strong military force?

11. Where in Chapters 5 and 14 does he say that it cannot come from dependence on the powerful heathen nations by whom they are surrounded?

12. Where in Chapter 5 does Hosea say that salvation will not come by a multitude of animal sacrifices?

13. Where in Chapter 12 does Hosea insist that the essential demand in religion is heart loyalty to God and goodness to man?

14. Where in Chapter 6 does Hosea combine this thought that Jehovah does not desire sacrifices with the idea that he does insist on kindness and an understanding of his real character? In what connection did Jesus make use of these words of Hosea in Matthew 12?

15. Where in Chapter 3 does Hosea suggest that the very intensity of God's goodness is that which in the latter days will inspire fear and reverence from his people?

16. Where in Chapters 2 and 14 does Hosea tell us that in the latter days Israel will repent and Jehovah will abundantly bless them?

17. How does Jesus in Matthew 5. 23 and 25. 34-40 and in Luke 18. 9-14 reaffirm the message of Hosea?



# ISAIAH



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## ISAIAH

# THE LITERARY PECULIARITIES OF THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

It is supremely important for the student of Isaiah to understand something of the literary peculiarities of the book. It is not a connected and prearranged discussion like the average modern prose work, but rather has the literary character of a volume of poems. Indeed the phenomenon is very similar to that which is presented to us in the works of a poet like Tennyson, where there are bound together not only many single poems, but also several little books of poems which were at first published separately. We have evidence of the composite structure of the book of Isaiah in the titles which are scattered through it (1. 1; 2. 1; 13. 1), and still more in the complete and coherent character of the units themselves, and their utter lack of relation to that which precedes and follows them. If our hymn-book were printed as prose, with nothing to indicate the separate hymns, the result would be a little like what we see in the King James Version of our Bible. It is just here that a paragraphed Bible, like the American Standard Version, or a work like Professor Moulton's Modern Reader's Bible, is of so much help to us.

Isaiah was a man of the hour, and probably often in some crisis sent out an oracle to be circulated among the people just as a modern newspaper issues an "extra." After the prophet's death some of his faithful

disciples collected these sermonic poems and bound them together. The book soon came to have a great reputation, and as people to-day are disposed to put unusually impressive poems between the leaves of their Bibles, so in those days men doubtless filed with their manuscript of Isaiah the inspired writings of later prophets. If they did not know the name of the writer they would perhaps call them the words of Isaiah just as we attribute to Lincoln any quaint and effective story that sounds like him. Indeed, this book seems to have become a kind of national gallery in which anonymous pictures that had something of the inspiration and majesty of Isaiah were hung.

Furthermore, a large part of Isaiah's prophecies were stern warnings of coming calamity. These predictions were fulfilled, and in their fulfillment succeeding prophets found a sign of the faithfulness of God on which they built great expectations for the future. The bone dust from the skeletons that were left after the fulfillment of the prophecies of doom made good fertilizers for the flowers of the gardens of hope. The cheering words found in immediate connection with some of Isaiah's sternest prophecies could scarcely have been uttered at the same time, for they would have nullified the prophet's attempt to startle the people into repentance. But written as footnotes to his message they were a great tribute to him. His words were spirit and life, and stimulated the minds of all succeeding prophets. Isaiah seems to have been like a comet which, in addition to the central ball of fire, leaves behind it a great train of light.



It might be asked, On what principle do scholars decide the date of a document? There are many considerations, and the conclusion is of course apt to be more or less uncertain, but the principal test which can be applied by any one who has an English Bible before him is this: The Hebrew prophets always uttered the words which were most needed at the time by the people to whom they spoke. If we were, for instance, to find in the prophecy of Isaiah, who wrote in the eighth century B. C., a sermon against the sins of the emperor Nero, who reigned eight hundred years later, we would naturally assume that Isaiah did not write it.

But someone might ask, Why could not God work the miracle of giving Isaiah a sermon which was especially directed to an emperor who arose eight centuries after the prophet lived? And the answer is, Of course God could have worked such a miracle, but the sermon would have meant nothing to the contemporaries of Isaiah, and probably would not have been preserved by them. And while he was writing it down he would need to neglect some ruler of his own day who very much needed a message from God. We would respect no preacher to-day who would spend his time attempting to write a sermon supposedly adapted to the problems with which men would be wrestling eight hundred years from now. And we assume that the requirements of common sense were the same in Isaiah's age as they are to-day. Hence the principal clue to the date of any prophetic oracle is the situation in Israel to which it is applicable, and which its local coloring seems to presuppose. This does not preclude the

prediction of the future, for a prophecy of the future is often the most helpful and practical message a prophet can give to his own day. But it does preclude a message which would be misleading and useless if the prophet had delivered it to the people with whom he lived.

But while the book of Isaiah is not arranged in chronological order, nevertheless some scheme for holding the material in mind and locating it is absolutely necessary for the satisfaction of the student. And fortunately such an outline may easily be constructed. The following is a simple synopsis of the message of Isaiah 1-39:

How pitiful your degradation! Repent and believe! (A late prophecy from the time of Sennacherib's invasion in 701) Chapter 1.

The glory of your pride will be brought low. (Early prophecies of Isaiah) Chapters 2 to 5.

I saw the Lord! (740) Chapter 6.

Fear not Ephraim and Damascus, but beware of Assyria. (735) Chapters 7 and 8.

God will raise up Messiah to defend and bless his people. Chapters 9 to 12.

The nations of Western Asia will become the prey of the destroyer. Chapters ~~24 to 27.~~ <sup>13</sup>

Put no confidence in Egypt; trust Jehovah to deliver you from the Assyrians. (Prophecies near the time of Sennacherib's invasion, 705-701) Chapters 28 to 39.

### THE LITERARY STYLE OF ISAIAH

Anyone who muses on the Isaiah landscape will be impressed by its grandeur. When a college class is asked to pick out the one adjective in the English language to describe the literary style of Isaiah they are apt to pick out the word grand, or one of its synonyms

like majestic, exalted, magnificent. One eager young student of Isaiah exclaimed to the writer, "The book seems as though it has been written in the Grand Canyon." Another said, "It should be read in the midst of great mountains and tall trees with a vast expanse of blue sky above." Another student exclaimed, "It seems like one of the frescoes of Michelangelo." And an enthusiastic young Italian musician said, "Isaiah makes me think of Wagner's Pilgrim's Chorus." They were all saying practically the same thing, namely, there is a certain exalted majesty in Isaiah's style. The flood of his thought comes with force and volume; no lawn-sprinkler here, but a Niagara.

The writer remembers to this day the thrill that went through him as a young lad when he first read Isaiah's picture of the onrushing invasion of the Assyrians:

And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss for them from the end of the earth; and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly. None shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken: whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent; their horses' hoofs shall be accounted as flint, and their wheels as a whirlwind: their roaring shall be like a lioness, they shall roar like young lions; yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and carry it away safe, and there shall be none to deliver (5. 26-29).

There is, however, in this grandeur no suggestion of grandiloquence, no fine writing. It is not the strut of a rhetorician, but the natural exaltation of a full soul overawed by a sense of the divine majesty and conscious of eternal issues at stake. Isaiah's coruscations are never mere fireworks; they are always real volcanoes. When we say this, however, we must at once guard against a false impression, because a volcano is something unrestrained and violent. But there is always a kind of epic restraint in Isaiah. He never goes to pieces from the intensity of his emotions.

Like all great poets, Isaiah has an eye for detail. This is almost humorously manifest in the way in which he scornfully describes the finery of the fashionable ladies of his day (3. 16-24). He has such a minute knowledge of the geography and scenery of the surrounding countries that one almost feels that he had made journeys to them in order to get material for his prophecies. He has a creative imagination, and hence his words are full of color and vividness.

The benefit of constant familiarity with such impressive literature cannot be overestimated. Ruskin, whose wonderful prose style is the despair of imitators, tells us that he owes much to the fact that as a lad he was encouraged to commit long passages from Isaiah.

# ISAIAH'S DIAGNOSIS OF THE CONDITIONS IN JUDAH AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS MINISTRY

## CHAPTERS 2-5

Isaiah was a citizen of Jerusalem. We know nothing of his family, but there are indications that he was an aristocrat, and it is thought that he was of royal birth. His prophetic ministry was to Judah, his own country, and he began his work about 740 B.C., somewhere near the middle of Hosea's ministry in Israel.

### THE INTERNAL CONDITIONS

The conditions in Judah at this time seemed, on the surface, much more hopeful than those in northern Israel where Hosea was weeping over a nation that was morally and politically in decay. That Judah had not gone to pieces as Israel had done was in a measure due to the exalted character of her king, Uzziah. After his death Jotham, his son, reigned only a short time, and was succeeded, about 736, by his son, the weak and dissolute Ahaz. And then, with his penetrating vision, Isaiah could see ominous signs of the doom that was coming upon his loved Jerusalem.

His analysis of existing conditions was as daring as it was keen. He bitterly denounced the luxury of the nobles, especially because it had been gained at the expense of the poor. It meant greed and injustice and oppression. He saw nothing but woe for a country

where the small landholders were crowded out by them that "join house to house, that lay field to field" (5. 8). Jehovah himself entered into judgment "with the elders of his people, and the princes thereof," saying, "It is ye that have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses; what mean ye that ye crush my people, and grind the face of the poor" (3. 14, 15)?

With this extreme concentration of wealth and this oppression of the poor there came the inevitable train of vices. It goes without the saying that in connection with greed there would be graft and injustice. They rose up early in the morning to follow strong drink; they tarried late in the night till wine inflamed them. They harnessed themselves to evil as with wagon ropes. They sinned with all their might. They lost all sense of moral distinctions; they called evil good, and good evil (5. 11, 18, 20). They played fast and loose with the truth like the modern predatory interests that fill the newspapers with lying propaganda. And for all this Jehovah's "anger is not turned away; but his hand is stretched out still" (5. 25).

The spirit of selfish disregard of others revealed itself in a most aggravated form in the snobbish luxury of the fashionable women. Like Amos, Isaiah forcibly and pitilessly portrays their self-indulgence and its sure punishment.

Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with outstretched necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet; therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the

daughters of Zion. . . . In that day the Lord will take away the beauty of their anklets, and the cauls, and the crescents; the pendants, and the bracelets, and the mufflers; the headdresses, and the ankle chains, and the sashes, and the perfume boxes, and the amulets (3. 16-20).

From Isaiah's point of view the religious conditions were even more lamentable than the social sins which sprang from them. In their blindness to the glory of God men worshiped "the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers had made" (2. 8). Even those who were not idolaters thought Jehovah worship primarily a matter of ceremonialism. Men were so self-confident that they did not feel their need of Jehovah. Isaiah was distressed by those who were "wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight" (5. 21); and he predicted the coming of a day when all the lofty things of earth would be laid in the dust before the majesty of Jehovah.

For there shall be a day of Jehovah of hosts upon all that is proud and haughty, and upon all that is lifted up; and it shall be brought low; and upon all the oaks of Bashan, and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every lofty tower, and upon every fortified wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant imagery. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; and Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day (2. 12-17).

Indeed, here we have the basic difficulty of the people's life as our prophet analyzed it. At the root of every sin that he condemned was insensibility to the Divine majesty. Men must first have seen the holiness of the King before they are aware of their sins.

The tragedy of Israel's apostasy is expressed in the beautiful parable of the vineyard.

My well beloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; and he digged it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also hewed out a winepress therein. . . . What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes (5. 1, 2, 4).

Thus we see that, like Amos and Hosea, Isaiah was thrilled with the sense of the extraordinary privileges and honors that God had bestowed upon his people. And out of the gracious past he heard the same message that they had heard, that privilege brings with it not political security as the people seemed to think, but responsibility. And so their punishment is to be the withdrawal of the grace which they had scouted.

And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor hoed; but



there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it (5. 5, 6).

The cross in the heart of Isaiah was the contrast between these real conditions and that great national ideal which he gives us in one of his opening prophecies. He shows us "the mountain of Jehovah's house established on the top of the mountains" with all nations flowing unto it, and, after hearing the revelation of Jehovah, going home to "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks" (2. 2-4). And now what were the real conditions? The people were "filled with customs from the east"; they were "soothsayers like the Philistines" (2. 6). That is to say, instead of exporting truth, they were actually importing superstition. Commercialism and militarism had begun to eat like a moth into the nation's life. As a means of preparing for war "their land was full of horses"; neither was there "any end of their chariots" (2. 7). Instead of being a Geneva tribunal for settling the world's disputes they were increasingly becoming a militaristic and warlike people. In domestic affairs they had chosen material gain rather than the exaltation of Jehovah. In international relationships they had preferred to seek safety in military preparedness and defensive alliances rather than in that peaceful spirit that would attract the whole world to them as friends. All of this unfaithfulness to their high privileges pointed in the very nature of things to national calamity.

## THE INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK

Isaiah's feeling that the sin and ingratitude of Judah would inevitably bring upon them the judgment of God was re-enforced by the dark cloud on the international horizon. This cloud was the rising power of Assyria. In 745 the great Tiglath-pileser came to the Assyrian throne. He was the Napoleon of those days, and Judah had no Wellington to meet him. Every caravan that came to Jerusalem brought rumors of his ambitious plans. He had a grim habit of either destroying an entire people when he conquered them, or of carrying them off as captives to some other portion of his empire. The whole world trembled with the dread of his possible approach. Men in general, however, while they shuddered before the Assyrian spectre, did not realize that this nation was destined to overrun western Asia. But men of discernment and spiritual intuition, like Isaiah, saw that its power was irresistible. It was as though a prophet should have arisen in the prosperity just preceding the World War and predicted that France should be desolate and the flower of England's youth should be laid in the dust before the German spirit of conquest.

Isaiah realized, as had Amos before him, that with all their proud militaristic self-confidence, the Jewish defense would be as an empty shell before the ferocious impact of this vigorous people. With northern Israel steeped in vice and heathenism and destined to almost immediate extinction, the little kingdom of Judah seemed to be the sole hope of keeping alive in the world the great ideals of the religion of Jehovah. And this

very same Judah, honeycombed with heathenism and led by apostate rulers, was apparently about to be crushed under the heel of a pagan conqueror. The outlook was indeed dark, and being a prophet was serious business. Surely Isaiah needed to be sustained by some great vision of God, and such a vision was vouchsafed to him.

### SEARCH QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

1. According to Chapter 1, in whose reign did Isaiah begin his ministry?

2. What indication do you find in Isaiah 2 and 3 that wealth abounded in Israel at the time these opening prophecies were uttered?

3. What warnings and predictions do you find in Chapters 2, 3, and 5 that make it evident that the prophet was greatly troubled by the arrogance and pride of the people?

4. It has been said that Amos regarded inhumanity to be the great sin of Israel, and that Hosea deemed it ingratitude, but that to Isaiah the great sin of his people was insensibility to the Divine majesty. Do you find any evidence in Isaiah 2 that he ascribed the pride of the people to their blindness to the glory of God, and looked forward to the day when they would have a terrified awakening to his majesty?

5. The Hebrew seers had been dreaming of Jerusalem as the educational and religious center of the world (2. 1-4). Where, however, in Chapter 2 does Isaiah tell us that instead of living up to this ideal they were actually importing heathen fortune tellers to guide them in their perplexities?

6. In a series of woes in 5. 8-23 Isaiah gives a condensed description of the moral and social conditions in Israel. The sins he describes are of a type that almost inevitably appear together, one leading to another.

(a) Where in these woes do you find evidence of the way in which the rich by grasping and selfish methods were getting possession of the lands of the common people?

(b) Where have we proof that the rich were given over to drink and idleness?

(c) Where does the prophet suggest that instead of yielding to temptation under special pressure there were classes of men in the community who turned the whole force of their wills to sin?

(d) In what words does the prophet point to the prevalence of graft and bribery, and to the disposition to whitewash iniquity?

(e) Do you see how the bad conditions described in the woes in 5. 8-23 are natural results the one of the other?

7. Where in Chapters 2-4 do you find evidences of the same ominous social symptom that appears to-day in the so-called "flapper"? What conditions mentioned in Chapters 2-5 naturally lead to the development of this unfortunate type? What, according to Isaiah, is to be the outcome of the society that produces such immodest and extravagant women?

8. Where in Chapter 5 does the prophet say that the moral conditions of the country render it like a dry stubble field ready to burn with the fire of judgment at any time?

9. The monuments tell us that Tiglath-pileser of Assyria was at this time menacing Western Asia. See if you can find any evidence in Chapter 5 that Isaiah realized the danger of an invasion and was seeking to make the people realize it.

10. What analogies to the conditions described by Isaiah do we find present in our own social life? Are we to look for the same outcome that Isaiah predicted?

## ISAIAH'S INAUGURAL VISION

### CHAPTER 6

A student of the life of Isaiah is constantly moved to ask the question, How could he be so brave and patient? The world has had many great men who flamed up for a brief time like a bonfire and then died down. Isaiah's great fire of optimism and courage burned for forty years in spite of rejection and discouragement. He was a bush that burned with fire and was not consumed, and, like Moses, we turn aside to see this great sight, and to ask, Why?

The inaugural vision is one of the answers to this inquiry concerning the source of Isaiah's strength. It is not to be regarded as simply one of many great experiences of his life, but rather, like the vision that came to Paul on the Damascus road, it is the experience that explains all the rest of his career.

The call of Isaiah, like that of Paul, was more vivid and overpowering than that of ordinary men because the tasks that awaited him were harder and the discouragements more deadening. The great visions of God are not for tourists in the realm of religion, nor for pleasure seekers with cameras and field glasses. They are for those who face stern situations and who are willing to bear burdens.

The vision began with an overwhelming sense of God. God suddenly became real to him. As over against the great Assyrian king who seemed to be rapidly gaining

control of the world, he saw a vision of Jehovah ceaselessly and powerfully working to establish righteousness in the earth. His mind had been dwelling upon kings before the vision came to him. The great king of his own country had died. He had been wondering who would protect his people from the king across the Euphrates. And now he exclaims in wonder, "Mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts."

But this vision brought not joy, but terror. It made him conscious of his own sins and of the sins of the people. This is a universal accompaniment of all real visions of God. Indeed, the humbling effect of the vision is one of the reasons why we know that it was no delusion, for deceiving visions are apt to impress a man with his own greatness.

The particular sin of which Isaiah was convicted was uncleanness of lips. This does not necessarily imply that he was a man of unclean or profane speech. He was doubtless one of the cleanest men of his generation. But it does imply that he was a man whose speech did not always come with prophetic inspiration. His words were not uniformly brave, timely and filled with a due sense of the glory of God. And as for the speech of the people whose uncleanness of lips he also bewails, we may easily believe that it waded through the deep mire.

The experience which assured the prophet that his own sins were forgiven took on a peculiar form adapted to his peculiar sin. One of the seraphim flew, "having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; and he touched my mouth

with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven." The way in which this assurance came was, of course, due to the circumstances. Isaiah had been in the temple and, perhaps, had been looking at the carved images of the seraphim, and they became glorified in his imagination. The element of the vision that was universal, and is found in all normal religious experience, was its direct personal assurance of the cleansing grace of God.

It is interesting to note that Isaiah received no specific and compulsive call to his special task. After his assurance of forgiveness he hears the general call that God was broadcasting through the world, and he offers himself for the work. The voice said, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" It was the same voice that had been calling him throughout his life, but now his soul was attuned to take the message. God never drafts men into his service. They must always volunteer. And Isaiah's response was glad and eager, "Here am I; send me." He was like a sick man suddenly recovered. Tasks which before had excited repulsion, or had been unnoticed, are now looked forward to with eagerness.

The command which God then gave to Isaiah has caused much discussion among the theologians. Jehovah said to Isaiah:

Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not: and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see

with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed (6. 9, 10).

This passage, as in the case of all other Scripture, must be interpreted in the light of the fact that God is love. Literally understood, the command is wicked. It is a devil's commission, and not the commission of a prophet. But we must remember that Isaiah had just seen the Lord high and lifted up, and the whole earth full of his glory, and his soul was so filled with light that he was not in danger of interpreting this dark enigma in the wrong way.

What is the meaning of the command to close the eyes of the people? Isaiah was a young idealist, and would go out with great hopefulness expecting that men would respond to his glowing words, and doubtless in many instances they did. But as far as the nation as a whole was concerned, this was not to be the case. The prophet would be called upon to pass through the bitter experience of finding the people of Jerusalem at first, in a measure, moved by his appeals, and brought under conviction for their sins; but after a time he would find them, as the result of shaking off these first impressions, less and less sensitive to his burning words until at last they grew indifferent, if not contemptuous. And so his appeals might be said to harden the national heart.

To save him from being soured and disheartened, this premonition of apparent failure was given him at the beginning of his ministry. It was a kind of vaccination against discouragement. And so when the dark



times came, instead of destroying his faith, the fulfillment of his premonition strengthened his confidence in the divine source of his vision. In the words of Jesus, his afflictions "turned to him for a testimony."

Isaiah, full of youthful hope, could not believe that the time of apparent failure was to be more than a passing phase, and he was right. There was indeed morning beyond the dark horizon, but that morning was much farther away than he supposed. And so in answer to his question, How long? he hears the words, "Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste, and Jehovah have removed men far away, and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land." The land must be devastated before God could have his way with the people.

This initial period of failure in which all one's efforts are frustrated and baffled seems to be the first stage in the career of nearly every great reformer and prophet, both ancient and modern. Especially are these reverses apparently necessary for careers of century-long influence. Tragedy seems to be the essential background for the promulgation of a world-moving message. The supreme illustration of the effectiveness of this experience of rejection as a throne from which to rule over the hearts of men is found in the cross of Jesus.

The proof of the divine origin of Isaiah's vision is found in the results. Into Isaiah's words "there crept a strange new fire," and this fire burned with undimmed brightness as the night settled down upon his people. Nothing is more real, no fact is more solid than a sane

and heroic life. It requires something more than an hallucination to account for the serenity, poise and wisdom with which Isaiah faced the thick coming discouragements. Every year of his long career made it more difficult to explain his call in any other way than that in which he himself explained it: he had felt the very touch of God.

### SEARCH QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

(Answers to questions where no reference is given can be found in the preceding discussion.)

1. A great religious experience to be complete must consist of (1) A vision of God; (2) A sense of sin; (3) An assurance of forgiveness; (4) A call to duty. Write the above divisions on the margin of your Bible, opposite the appropriate verses in Isaiah 6.

2. What foreign menace and what national bereavement combined to render an encouraging vision of the power of God needful to Isaiah?

3. In those days a god was supposed to be more or less limited to the country where he was worshiped. Where in the vision is a very different conception of the sphere of Jehovah's activity revealed to Isaiah?

4. "Woe is me; I am a man of unclean lips." Does this necessarily mean that Isaiah had been profane or obscene in his speech? What beside this might it have meant? Compare Matthew 12. 36; Colossians 4. 6.

5. What was it that had made Isaiah so suddenly conscious of his uncleanness of lips?

6. When overcome with a sense of sin, what would the ordinary Israelite of the prophet's day have felt that it was necessary for him to offer to secure forgiveness? Contrast with this common error the story of Isaiah's forgiveness. Compare also Psalm 51. 16, 17. See also, for the New Testament development of this idea, Titus 3. 4-6.

7. "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Was this a new call, or had Isaiah's ears simply sharpened to hear it? What had quickened his hearing and made him eager to obey?

8. The warning that the people would reject Isaiah's message

was fulfilled. How, for instance, in Isaiah 8. 16-18 does the prophet tell us that he was forced by the rejection of his message to center his teaching work upon the little inner band of his disciples and wait for a better day? Where in Isaiah 28. 9-13 do the people complain of his repeated warnings by asking him contemptuously if he takes them for a kindergarten?

9. What indication do you find in Matthew 13 that Jesus, like Isaiah, found in the course of his ministry that men were becoming hardened to his teaching? According to Matthew 13, what device did Jesus use to hide his teaching from the mockery of the unbelieving and yet at the same time suggest it to the faithful?

10. When Jesus sent forth the twelve apostles, in order that they might not be surprised and wilted down by the troubles that awaited them, what similar warnings of coming rejection and persecution did he give? See Matthew 10 and John 16.

11. Where in Isaiah's vision, after the grim prophecy of coming discouragement, is there a note of hope?

12. What elements of this vision are present in all normal religious experiences, and what elements were local and are not apt to occur again in that form?

## THE INVASION OF JUDAH FROM NORTHERN ISRAEL AND DAMASCUS

### CHAPTERS 7 AND 8

Isaiah was soon to need all the insight and all the courage that came from his great vision.

Pekah, the king of Israel, and Rezin, the king of Damascus, conspired against Ahaz and in 735 came down to besiege Jerusalem. It is generally thought that their object was to force Judah into an alliance with themselves against the encroachments of the great monarch on the Euphrates, Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria. Ahaz and his people were in terror. "His heart trembled, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest tremble with the wind" (7. 2). One man, however, was not afraid, and it was the man who was most aware of the weakness of Judah. His sense of God was so overwhelming that he could not be moved by panic.

Ahaz made a brave appearance of inspecting the defenses as though he meant to hold out, but in his own mind he had already determined to put himself under the protection of the king of Assyria. Isaiah was sent to him with an admonition which was, in varying form, to be the main message of his whole ministry. "Take heed, and be quiet," he says; "fear not, neither let thy heart be faint" (7. 4). These two kings are but the smoking stumps of torches, or, as we would say, they are nearly burned-up matches. Moreover, it is not only

safe to trust God to deliver you from these enemies, but dependence on any other help will be vain. "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established" (7. 9). In the mind of the prophet faith was the one way of access to the living fountain of courage and strength.

The policy favored by Ahaz and the people was to send swift messengers around these two attacking forces and make an alliance with the great Assyrian power in their rear, so that he would attack their enemies from behind and draw them away from Jerusalem. This seemed to be the only practical course, and the king was vexed that this dreamer should come with his intrusive babble to mingle with stern affairs of state. He was in no mood for "Sunday-school politics."

Isaiah, seeing the incredulous and impatient look on the face of the king, and hoping to strengthen his faith, said, "Ask thee a sign of Jehovah thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above" (7. 11). But Ahaz, with mock piety that did not conceal his real contempt for the advice of the prophet, answered, "I will not ask, neither will I tempt Jehovah" (7. 12). The fact, of course, was that he was determined not to see any evidence which Isaiah might bring forward against an alliance with Assyria. Plainly he wished to be rid of the prophet whose policy of quietness and faith was wearisome nonsense to him. This was no place for preaching!

And now Isaiah's wrath was stirred, and he said, "Is it a small thing for you to weary men—how he had been wearied by this conceited reprobate!—that ye will weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself

will give you a sign (7. 13, 14). The sign which God gives to the unbelieving is always a twofold sign. He works the wonder whose possibility they scoff at, but he works it in a way that will mean punishment upon their infidelity. So in this case the sign was to be the swift destruction of the enemies whom they feared, but this deliverance was to do Israel no good, for it was to be followed by a devastation of the land at the hands of the Assyrians to whom they had fled for succor rather than to Jehovah.

The prophet's warning, however, was lost upon Ahaz. He carried out his policy and made his alliance with the great world conqueror; and Tiglath-pileser, true to his bargain, marched upon Damascus and Israel, and these nations drew off their forces from Jerusalem. It seemed for a time that the king's course had been the triumph of diplomacy, and doubtless men sneered at Isaiah for advising against it. But the tribute which the Assyrian imposed upon Judah was so heavy that it crippled the economic life of the people and ere long the little country rebelled. Then came the dread invasion just as Isaiah had predicted. To use the quaint figure of one of the writer's students, "the floating log to which Judah swam for salvation from the flood turned out to be an alligator!"

It was not, however, the fear of the tribute which moved Isaiah so passionately to oppose an Assyrian alliance. He well knew that Assyria would expect to have its hand on the whole governmental policy of Judah, and would desire to heathenize it just as did the Greek emperors in later times. The king would

be a puppet of the Assyrian king, and would feel bound to please him. Indeed, this process began at once, for we are told that Ahaz brought home from his interview with Tiglath-pileser the pattern of an altar which he set up in Jerusalem (2 Kings 16. 10). And this was only symbolical of the pattern of heathen ideals and morals which would at once begin to be imported. Judah had a religion which in its pure form was immeasurably superior to anything in the world, and the prophet felt, and rightly felt, that not only the fate of his own country but the fate of mankind depended upon keeping it pure.

Furthermore, the doughty prophet knew that if he could hold the little kingdom in loyalty to their God and his pure laws they would be such a vigorous and brave people that neither Egypt nor Assyria, the two great contending kingdoms of the world at that time, would turn aside to besiege their inaccessible citadel of Jerusalem. They would be so difficult to overcome that the conquest would not be worth the candle, and they would be left to themselves just as Switzerland was in the World War.

To sum it up then, in Isaiah's mind it was both bad religion and bad politics for them in their fear of their neighbors to take refuge under the wings of the Assyrian vulture. It was too close to his talons.

### SEARCH QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

(Answers to questions where no reference is given can be found in the preceding discussion.)

1. What was the date of the invasion of Judah by northern Israel (Ephraim) and Damascus?
2. What is generally supposed to have been the object of this invasion of Judah by northern Israel and Damascus?

3. Is there any evidence in Chapter 8 that the people, when frightened at the approach of Israel and Damascus, had consulted their wizards rather than Jehovah?

4. When Isaiah said, "Take heed and be quiet" (7. 9), did he mean, Take heed and be inactive? or, Trust in God and do not be frightened into an alliance with Tiglath-pileser?

5. What did Isaiah wish to say about the two kings who were attacking Judah when he called them stumps of smoking torches (7. 4)?

6. If Isaiah had persuaded the people to trust in God and keep quiet in their little mountain fastness, brave and united for self-defense, do you think the great warring empires of Egypt and Assyria would have bothered themselves to turn aside and spend the time and treasure necessary to capture Jerusalem? Compare the experience of Switzerland in the World War.

7. Why was Isaiah so much opposed to an alliance with Assyria against Damascus and northern Israel?

8. What would the great pagan power of Assyria naturally expect from Judah as the price of protection against Israel and Damascus?

9. Ahaz said, "I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord" (7. 12). Why did he not ask a sign? because he thought it would be presumptuous and a trouble to Jehovah, or because he was afraid the prophet would give him a sign from God indicating that he must do what he did not wish to do?

10. Isaiah offered to give Ahaz a sign which, if obeyed, would have saved his country from entangling alliances that led at last to its ruin. Seeing that he would not heed or obey, what was the nature of the sign that Jehovah was forced to give him?

11. "Butter (curds) and honey shall he eat when he knoweth to refuse the evil and choose the good" (7. 15). Is this a prediction of plenty, or is it a prediction that the child's parents will be compelled to feed him on the chance food they can obtain in a land desolated and grown wild after the Assyrian invasion? Compare 7. 21, 22.

12. In what peculiarly vivid language does Isaiah in 7. 18-25 and 8. 5-8 predict the devastation that will come if Judah makes an alliance with Assyria?

13. Where in Chapter 8 does Isaiah suggest that after the nation's rejection of his advice to trust God instead of putting themselves at the mercy of the fierce Assyrian conqueror he felt impelled to give himself to the task of making his message the secure possession of his little group of disciples?



# THE PROPHECIES OF THE COMING OF CHRIST

## PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

Before losing himself amid the problems that are raised by the scholars, the student of the prophecies of the coming of Christ ought to take a long and steady look at the unchallenged marvels that are found in these Old Testament oracles. They stand like snow-capped mountains, always refreshing him every time he catches a glimpse of them through the trees of the jungle of Biblical criticism in which he is apt to get lost.

## THE MARVELS OF MESSIANIC PROPHECY

The first marvel is this, that long centuries before the coming of Christ, when the little kingdom of Israel or Judah seemed about to be ground down under the heel of some mighty pagan conqueror, a prophet would arise and proclaim the coming of a great Deliverer through whom Jehovah would not only save them from extinction but set up his reign over the whole earth. The audacity of the faith of these men grows upon one the more he contemplates it, because especially after the destruction of northern Israel Judah was a mere speck in the great world mass, an utterly insignificant hill tribe in the presence of great world empires like Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt. One filling of a gasoline

tank would have been far more than sufficient to take an automobile over the whole length of it.

The next unchallenged marvel is the fact that these daring hopes were not uttered by a solitary genius, or by a few prophets in a single generation, but all down through the centuries, whenever the lamp of Israel's fortunes burned low these great fires of patriotic and religious expectation flamed up mysteriously, all the brighter and stronger because of the apparent hopelessness of the condition. In Japan there is an avenue of lofty and beautiful trees, nine miles long, leading up to one of the great temples at Nikko. The pious soul who planted these trees wished thus to impress visitors with a sense of the sacredness of the shrine to which they were going. This seems to be what God was doing when all along the pathway of the centuries he raised up a continuous line of prophets proclaiming the coming of a great Deliverer.

The modern, scientific mind seeks for continuity in all that it is called upon to believe. It wants to see in everything that it is expected to accept a part of a great divine process. And this we surely have in the long line of Jewish prophets who proclaimed the coming of the Bringer of salvation. Christ was not put down artificially into his age as a Christmas tree is thrust into a box and nailed there. His roots reach far back into the soil of history.

But the supreme wonder is the fact that after the century-long heraldings of the great King, after history seemed to have entered into a conspiracy with the powers of darkness to prove that these ancient prophets

were madmen, the matchless Personality did come, and he was far greater and more satisfying to human needs than any of them had ever dreamed.

Thus we have three wonders, the wonder of the daring faith of these men amid the darkness, the wonder of the succession of men in a straight line down to Christ, and the surpassing wonder of their vindication in the coming to the earth of a Man whose greatness was far beyond even their most glorious imaginings. And before we focus our eyes on the difficulties of Messianic prophecy we ought always to take a long and steady look at these three great marvels.

#### THE NEW TESTAMENT ATTITUDE TOWARD MESSIANIC PROPHECY

As Jesus looked back over the long line of Hebrew seers holding up their torches in the darkness, he said, They spake of me. "Beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24. 27). He plainly conceived himself to be the goal of prophecy. And the New Testament is unanimous in its belief that the ancient prophecies were fulfilled in him.

And yet it is plain that Jesus was a surprise to those who were looking for him, and even a disappointment to many. John the Baptist, his immediate forerunner, concerning whom Jesus spoke such words of praise, could scarcely believe that this kind friend, who went about doing pious chores, was the long-expected Messiah, and he sent a committee to him asking, "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" (Luke 7. 20)

The principal stumbling-block which John found in Jesus was doubtless the fact that he did not drive out Herod and Pontius Pilate, and the miserable wretches who had control of the temple at Jerusalem. He found in Jesus the spiritual fascination, but not the imperial glory. There was too big a contrast between Isaiah's picture of the great monarch sitting upon the throne of David, who was to smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips to slay the wicked (II. 4), and the barefoot peasant who, instead of sitting on a throne, was apt to be found seated on the ground in front of some humble cottage instructing the villagers in the things of God.

The answer to this difficulty only began to be seen after the resurrection, when the crucified and risen Christ poured out the Spirit upon his disciples at Pentecost and began his triumphant march of conquest over the hearts and affections of the race. To us after the centuries the answer of course is the obvious one that the three years of Jesus' earthly ministry did not complete his career, and that the gradual unfolding of Christian history has more and more exalted him in the affections and adoration of men until now he has become the chief source of moral and religious authority on the earth, and gives sure promise of being enthroned at length not merely in the hearts of the saints but in all the economic and social life of mankind. And then the imperial dreams of Isaiah concerning a king who was to reign at Jerusalem over that small part of the earth's surface which constituted his world will be more than fulfilled—they will be overflowed.

Consequently it is not correct to say that the dreams of the temporal reign of Christ were alloy in what should have been the exclusively spiritual vision of the old seers. It would be better to say that their conception of his temporal reign was not big enough, and that the slow method of teaching and suffering by which his dominion over the world would be achieved had not yet been revealed to them. When Christ's principles have their way in politics, government and business, it can be truly said that he is the temporal as well as the spiritual Lord of the earth.

#### THE MODERN INTERPRETATION OF MESSIANIC PROPHECY

But the greatest difficulty to the modern mind which insists on looking at the prophecies of Isaiah in the light of the history out of which they grew is the fact that the writer plainly expected the Messiah to come in his own day and deliver the people from the Assyrian yoke. And, of course, Christ did not come till long centuries after the Assyrian empire had ceased to exist. As a young lady exclaimed, "When Jesus came the garments which the prophets had made for him were not only too small, but they had gone out of style."

Anyone who studies prophecy will quickly admit all this. But Messiah was to be the representative of God, and the people in any age of course expected him to come and do for them what they needed to have done. If their particular danger was an Assyrian invasion, that was exactly the place where Jehovah's representative would give them help. All the prophets ex-

pected Messiah to save the people of their own time out of their own special difficulty. We find the same kind of expectation in the New Testament in regard to the second coming of Christ. The writer of the book of Revelation plainly expected Christ to deliver the church from the oppressive power of Rome.

One thing is sure, we must not think of these seers as though they were almanac makers predicting the precise times and manner in which Jesus was to come, and the exact scenery in which his ministry was to be carried out. It simply was not given to these men to know the times and seasons. Jesus said, "Of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only" (Matthew 24. 36). And if Jesus did not know the times, how much less would Isaiah!

And if a man cannot foresee the time in which a prophecy is to be fulfilled he cannot foresee the scenery. If he is not certain whether an event is to take place in May or October he does not know whether to paint the background with apple blossoms or with red-tinted fruit. The prophet did not have in his mind a photographic picture of the earthly ministry of Jesus. If such an image had been before his mind it would have been true only of the single instant at which the prophetic camera had been snapped. The only possible scenery which a prophet could use, and the only scenery which his hearers would be able to appreciate, was the scenery of his own day.

And so we cast aside the almanac theory of Old Testament prophecy, and we do it with gratitude that

we are free from the deadening influence of such a view. If it could be proven that one could figure out the precise times and seasons in which a prophecy was to be fulfilled, and the precise manner of it, we might have a Bible whose credit would go up for a moment like a skyrocket, but its light would as quickly come down again in the darkness. For if it could be demonstrated that the lid of prophecy fitted mechanically over the box of fulfillment, we should have a mechanical universe where history was fixed, and events ticked themselves off like the mechanism in the time lock of a bank safe. And that would mean that all the strivings and all the prayers and all the exhortations of the Bible were but vain and ineffectual beatings against the huge cog-wheel forces of inexorable necessity.

But someone says, If Isaiah predicted the coming of the wonderful Deliverer in his own day, and he did not come for eight hundred years, how can we escape from the conclusion that Isaiah was both deceiver and deceived?

Two things may be said in answer to this question. In the first place Isaiah was under the necessity of assuring his generation that God would deliver them if they trusted him. To have failed to do this would have been to belie God and to allow the people to become utterly discouraged. But how could he do this? If he had known of heaven he might have promised them its rewards, but that was a light that did not fully dawn until the time of Christ. There is a hint of a resurrection in Isaiah, but that was a resurrection to an earthly life. Nothing is said about the many mansions in the

Father's house. And so the only way Isaiah could assure men that God was good, and that he would certainly bless his righteous servants, was to paint a glowing picture of an ideal day which was soon to dawn. The people who believed his promises were not deceived, for while they did not enter into the earthly Utopia that Isaiah pictured, we are allowed on the authority of Christ to believe that they entered into the heavenly rewards, and paradise was a more perfect fulfillment of the prophet's dream than the glorious prospect of peace and plenty which Isaiah held out to them.

And even setting aside the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies in the unseen world, his prophecy of the coming kingdom was a great and solid contribution to his own age. The fundamental need of men is not so much a knowledge of how soon the kingdom will come as an absolute certainty that it is coming. What God will certainly do in the future reveals what he now is. A man who knows that he will receive a certain sum of money at the beginning of the year is in a very real sense enjoying it now. When men have this assurance that the kingdom will come they are "saved by hope." The glowing picture that Isaiah painted for his generation made them look up and know that all the flowers that were to bloom in the gardens of the new day were already blossoming in the heart of God. And God himself became their exceeding great reward.

To appreciate what the prophets of Messiah did for the ages preceding his coming one needs only to stop and picture to himself the outcome of Jewish history if its leaders had not been inspired with this hope.



What, for instance, would have happened amid the discouragements of the exile in Babylon, or in the later times of fierce persecution under the successors of Alexander the Great, if the people had not been looking with eager expectation for the great Deliverer?

It may be taken for granted beforehand that the ancient prophets did not see the King in all his beauty. If they had possessed this fullness of vision one could hardly say that our Lord gave a new revelation. Eye would already have seen, and ear heard, the things that God had prepared for them that love him. On the contrary, the prophecies were a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawned, and the day-star arose in men's hearts (2 Peter 1. 19). Even Paul, who, of course, had a fuller revelation than any Old Testament saint, said: "We know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away" (1 Corinthians 13. 9,10). We should come to the Old Testament oracles not expecting to find the gold worked up into the engraved jewelry of the New Testament revelation, but rather expecting to find the richest gold-bearing quartz. If we come in this state of mind we shall be more than satisfied with what we discover.

To consider all the foreshadowings of Christ in the prophecy of Isaiah would require the writing of a commentary on the whole book, for we, with the old Jewish rabbis, consider everything to be a prophecy of Christ which expresses faith in the coming of that ideal social order which Christ came to establish in the earth. Any prophecy is Messianic when it predicts the coming of

one who is to accomplish the Messianic mission, no matter in what garb the prophet may conceive him, or in what historical setting. Whenever any old seer with daring hope painted a picture of the ideal day which showed that he understood the character of God, and the laws according to which he was ruling the world, that picture is a true prophecy of Christ. And any one of a thousand ways in which these longings have been realized and these principles have been worked out in the succeeding ages, may be called a fulfillment of the picture in which the prophet visualized his understanding of the ideal day. Any wistful longing for that which Christ came to bring, any word which goes in the direction that Jesus went, may be called a Messianic prophecy. And from this standpoint the whole of Isaiah may be called "a sigh for Christ."

We shall be compelled, however, to confine ourselves to the consideration of a few of the more outstanding oracles which visualize him as a great King, some of which may be of a later date than the time of Isaiah or, as certain recent scholars are urging, of an earlier date; but all of which are in harmony with the spirit of Isaiah, and represent his fundamental ideas.

### THE IMMANUEL PROPHECY

(7. 1-17)

We shall begin with the oracle on which we are disposed to bear least weight as a prophecy of Christ.

When Ahaz, too frightened and too busy with preparations for the defense of his capital, not only refused to

heed the word of the prophet, but rejected his offer of a sign from God, Isaiah sternly rejoined:

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, when he knoweth to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings thou abhorrest shall be forsaken. Jehovah will bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—even the king of Assyria.

Matthew quotes a part of this passage as a prophecy of Christ. In spite of this, many scholars are saying that this is no prophecy of the Messiah at all. They urge that it was a threat of judgment and that it had no other practical purpose so far as the king was concerned. The object in using the figure of the young Child was to intensify the following picture of destruction. The great things which the fond hope of young motherhood always believes and plans for the firstborn are contrasted with that utter devastation of all fair hopes and expectations which is to come through the folly and atheism of the king.

There can be no doubt that the prophecy was primarily a threat to Ahaz. The prophet had gone to the king with a message of hope and deliverance. But alas, the king's folly was to frustrate it. A sword was to pierce the heart of the young mother who in great

faith had called her son Immanuel—God with us—for he was to be cast out with his parents to the life of a nomad, and was to be nourished upon the wild honey that might chance to be found in the crevices of the rocks, and the curds that were made from the milk of the few animals that were left after the devastation of the land.

But this judgment in the mind of Isaiah could never be final. When he was bidden to go to the king he tells us that God commanded him to take with him Shear-jashub, his son. The name of the child means, A remnant shall return. This thought, then, of deliverance after desolation was in the prophet's mind when he first went to the king. Indeed this idea of a returning remnant is in the very warp and woof of his lifelong message to Israel. We understand him, then, to say that Ahaz will be punished, his kingdom will be ravaged; but we understand him to announce the doom in such language as suggests hope for the future.

In support of the view that the child Immanuel is to be the Deliverer, we may point to 8. 8, where the devastated land is called Immanuel's land, indicating that he was to be a king; and also to the prophecy of the Wonderful Child in 9. 1-7, which seems to have been spoken about this time to the immediate circle of Isaiah's disciples, and is most naturally associated with the Child whose name is to be called Immanuel.

In opposition to Matthew's application of the prophecy to the infant Christ it is also objected that the Hebrew word for virgin does not necessarily mean virgin in the sense in which Matthew quotes this

prophecy, but is a general word for a young woman of marriageable age. This is now universally admitted by scholars. And the mere fact that the New Testament says that this prophecy was fulfilled in Christ is not conclusive proof that the writer deems it a conscious prediction of him, for that is not always what the New Testament means when it says a prophecy is fulfilled. It often simply means, Here is another instance of the operation of the same principle to which the old prophet formerly called attention. It is as though a schoolboy, after successfully solving a problem in mathematics, should say, This all works out according to the formula. And sometimes the reference to an Old Testament oracle as having been fulfilled merely means that the Old Testament phrase beautifully expresses what the writer wishes to say, and he uses it as we would use a quotation from Shakespeare. As John Wesley said long ago, the New Testament writers deemed an Old Testament prophecy to have been fulfilled when its words aptly express a New Testament fact, even though those words were used by the Old Testament writer in a very different connection.

And so we would put no stress upon this passage as a prediction of the virgin birth of Christ. The deity of our Lord is too well established to need any strained interpretations in its defense. And it is far more important to see the foreshadowings of Christ in the Old Testament than to be able to find direct predictions which have been literally fulfilled.

And surely the faith of the young mother that her child would have the wonderful presence of God in his

life was a foreshadowing of the faith of the virgin who called her son Jesus because he would save his people from their sins; and the subsequent misery of the homeless parents and child was a foreshadowing of the misery of the Holy Family hunted by Herod. Both the faith and the misery are illustrations of what is constantly happening in a world where God is forever giving good things, and man in unbelief and hardness of heart is forever trampling upon them.

### THE WONDERFUL CHILD

(9. 1-7)

Out of the same dark crisis from which the Immanuel prophecy sprang, when Isaiah's voice was set at naught, shines like a mighty torch the prophecy of the Wonderful Child. Immediately after his prediction of the horrors of the Assyrian invasion the prophet exclaimed:

But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphthali; but in the latter time hath he made it glorious, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. . . . For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his

government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even forever.

Many, and indeed most, scholars conceive this Wonderful Child to be the same Immanuel who was to be brought up amid the desolation of his ravaged country (7. 10-17). Man's unbelief could make him a wretched nomad upon the site of the gardens and farms of his native country, but man's wickedness could not permanently keep him down or subvert the gracious purposes of God.

But whatever our conception of the prophecy, certain it is that we have here the vision of an altogether marvelous personage who was to be born to save his people. The fact that it is said that he was to come to Galilee, as Jesus really did, is interesting, but not something that ought to focus our attention and keep it away from the more wonderful fact that in the utter desolation of this time the prophet was inspired with such a daring faith. With the weak and wicked Ahaz on the throne, and Tiglath-pileser, the mighty Assyrian monarch, coming up like a flood to overrun western Asia and transport or annihilate the conquered nations, the thought of a world-swaying Prince arising in the wee little mountain kingdom of Judah seemed a dream of madness. And yet here is the prophet telling us that a Child is born and "his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

And notice how this king was to be the exact counter-

part and checkmate of the cruel Assyrian conqueror whose fierce march on western Asia called forth this prophecy. Of the increase of Tiglath-pileser's government and of war there seemed to be no end in that dreadful day. But to offset his conquest the prophet says of Messiah, "Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end." For every terrible and destructive thing that Tiglath-pileser stood for there was a powerful and benevolent counterpart in the Messiah.

Imagine the comfort and hope and inspiration which these words must have afforded to the shuddering audience of the faithful who had, perchance, just heard of some new horror of the Assyrian conqueror. And the prophet adds, "The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this" (9. 7). That is to say, Back of these glad words is the enthusiasm of God.

### THE SUPREME JUDGE AND DELIVERER

(II. 1-10)

And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah. And his delight shall be in the fear of Jehovah; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither decide after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the



earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins (II. 1-5).

This marvelous poem does not have a distinct and unmistakable historic background. It is a dream that might have come out of any of those centuries of oppression where the judges decided by hearsay and where the poor were thrust aside in favor of those who came with outward show and pretense. It is a dream of justice in a world of oppression.

The king is to be of the stock of Jesse. The prophets had an idea that nothing great and beautiful would ever be allowed permanently to die. David had been so great that God would surely not permit his dynasty to fall to the ground. It is doubtful whether a man so spiritual as Isaiah would have greatly stressed the necessity of this monarch being a lineal descendant of David, although doubtless this was what he had in mind. The essential point is that he shall carry on the great traditions which David originated, for that monarch had so captured the imagination of the people by his generosity, courage, and idealism that to them the ideal day was but the flowering out of that which he stood for.

The great ruler is to be a philosopher and a sage. He is to have the spirit of wisdom and understanding. But he is also to have the spirit of counsel and might. He is to be no mere "professor," but a statesman, a practical man of affairs with the ability to carry out great designs. And all of this is to be spiritualized and

illuminated through his touch with God, for he is to have the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah. He is to be quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord, or, as it might be literally translated, he is to be quick of scent in the fear of the Lord. He is to have an instinct for God's will that is like the hound's scent for game.

And like all the great prophets, the Messiah is to go beneath the surface and not judge by conventional and artificial standards. He is not to judge after the sight of his eyes, nor to decide after the hearing of his ears. Like a physician with an X-ray machine he is to go into the very heart of the problems that are brought before him, and read the innermost thoughts and intentions of men. And this implies, of course, that the poor man will have a chance in his court, and will be delivered from his arrogant and lying oppressors.

The word of the great judge is to be so powerful and so quickly obeyed that it might be said that he will smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips will he slay the wicked. Like Mrs. Stowe with her *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, he is to smite wrongs, and they will die. And just as the girdle was in Isaiah's time the most impressive and prominent part of a man's wardrobe, so righteousness and faithfulness will be the one thing that men will always see in Messiah's actions and in his spirit. His character and his goodness are to be more conspicuous even than his gifts.

Then follows that beautiful picture of the day when "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard

shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (11. 6). Whether this was originally associated with the great prophecy of the inspired Prince, we do not know, but it is placed most appropriately in connection with it.

Of course this is a poem, and the man who raises biological questions in connection with it and calls our attention to the fact that the alimentary canal of the lion is not adapted to the digestion of straw, illustrates that which Davidson of Edinburgh called "the chief impediment to the understanding of the Old Testament—the prosaic mind." A modern prophet, of course, would not dwell fondly on this vision of the taming of the wild animals, for they have ceased to be a menace; but the idea back of this picture of warring nature at peace is one greatly needed to-day. Men are saying that the laws of social psychology are such that the man who has wheat to sell must forever fight over the price with the man who wishes to buy it; and that the man who wishes to hire his fellow man to help him in the building of his house will, from the nature of the case, forever haggle with him over his wages. War, they say, is in the nature of things. The prophet says Nay, the goal of history is peace.

### THE SURE FOUNDATION

(28. 14-22)

Another most interesting prophecy of Isaiah that is quoted in the New Testament as referring to Christ is found in the account of the prophet's conflict with the

scoffing rulers of Israel at the time when he was warning them so earnestly against the fatal results of their lying diplomacy and their secret treaty with Egypt.

Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone of sure foundation: he that believeth shall not be in haste. And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place. And your covenant with death shall be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol shall not stand (28. 15-18).

What the prophet visualized in his imagination as the foundation on which God would build a stable social order we do not exactly know. It was possibly the faithful few who believed in God and righteousness as the sure defense of the nation against the oncoming Assyrian scourge, and who therefore opposed the policy of entangling themselves with a treacherous and vile heathen nation like Egypt. This righteous remnant was, of course, the foundation on which, after the coming devastation, God would build for the future. Possibly the prophet conceived of an inspired personality at the center of this group. But whatever picture was

before his imagination, plainly the idea is that a foundation solid and eternal, and everlastingly righteous, should be established in Zion for God to build his kingdom upon. And we know that in a unique and perfect degree Jesus fulfilled this prophecy, and the apostle rightly seizes upon the words of Isaiah as a most fortunate and happy statement of the function of Messiah in the world for, as he says, the church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone."

### THE IDEAL SOCIAL ORDER

(32. 1-5)

Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in justice. And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as streams of water in a dry place, as the shade of a great rock in a weary land. . . . The fool shall be no more called noble, nor the churl said to be bountiful (32. 1, 2, 5).

Naturally the prophet pictures the ideal day as a monarchy, for that was the only kind of government he knew. But surely he wonderfully visualizes the kingdom of God. At the center, as we have seen before, is the king, but around him are the princes. It is the characteristic of the ideal king that he enthrones those who work with him. In the book of Revelation round about the throne of God there were four and twenty thrones (Revelations 4. 4).

But the most interesting part of this picture in Isaiah

is not the king, nor the princes, but the ordinary subjects. Not only shall a king reign in righteousness and princes rule in justice, but a man—that is, any man—“shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as streams of water in a dry place, as the shade of a great rock in a weary land.” The common man will be a refuge. He will be a fountain for thirsty souls. He will be a protection from the dreadful heats and from the sand storms of the desert. Here truly is a marvelous visualization of Jesus’ ideal of the “civilization of the brotherly man.”

This thought of the wonderful social helpfulness of the ordinary man in the ideal day was taken up by Jesus in his words about John the Baptist, “He that is but little in the kingdom of God is greater than he” (Luke 7. 28). That is to say, in the perfect social order education will be so effective and the conditions so inspiring that the commonest man will develop a power and a helpfulness that is greater than that of the geniuses of the past, just as to-day any cow in a dairyman’s herd is better than the prize-winner at the county fair a hundred years back.

Out of what weariness of soul comes the glad hope of that day in which “the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken,” and “the fool shall be no more called noble, nor the churl (or crafty man) said to be bountiful!” It is Isaiah’s longing for the day of a correct public sentiment when all things will be called by their right names, and no pearls will be cast before swine, neither will they give that which is holy unto the dogs.

As the background to this prophecy we have the vision of that agricultural prosperity which science in time will doubtless help us to attain. The wilderness shall become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest (32. 15). That is, crops will be so rank and luxuriant that they will seem like the growth of trees. And as the prophet contemplates the idyllic scene he congratulates the dwellers in the new day, exclaiming, "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth the feet of the ox and the ass" (32. 20).

### SEARCH QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

(Answers to questions where no reference is given can be found in the preceding discussion)

1. What three unchallenged wonders do you find in the Old Testament prophecies of the coming of Christ?

2. What would you say to the man who asserted that because Jesus never sat on a literal throne in Jerusalem as Isaiah predicted he cannot be said to have fulfilled Isaiah's prophecies in Chapter 9?

3. What would you say to the man who was troubled over the fact that the prophecies we are accustomed to call prophecies of Christ seem to expect the Deliverer to save the people of the prophet's own generation from their oppressors?

4. What would you say to the man who insisted that Isaiah cherished false hopes for himself and his own generation?

5. If a teacher of literature should say of one of his students, In ten years that young man will be professor of English literature in one of our great universities; and after ten years the young man should still be in obscurity, but in twenty years he would have written a book that was accepted as a classic throughout the land, would you say that his teacher had uttered a true prophecy?

6. When Jesus was born his mother gave him a great name expressing her faith in the wonderful thing he would do for his people, but soon the folly and cruelty of Herod made her and the child homeless wanderers. Do you find any expressions in Isaiah 7. 1-17 that are parallel to this experience of Mary?

7. Can you find any parallel between Isaiah 9. 3-7 and the song of the angels in Luke 2. 13, 14?

8. It seemed as though there would be no end of the increase of the power of Tiglath-pileser and of the wars that he stirred up. How does the prophet Isaiah contrast the coming Messiah with him (9. 3-7)?

9. What parallel do you find between the plans of Messiah in Matthew 28. 16-20 and in Isaiah 9. 3-7?

10. Can you see any likeness between the insight which Jesus showed when he said that the poor widow had cast into the treasury more than the rich men (Luke 21. 1-4) and the qualities which are assigned to the coming Messiah in Isaiah 11. 1-5?

11. Jesus came announcing a blessing upon the poor and the meek (Matthew 5. 3-5). Where is this prophesied in Isaiah 11. 1-5?

12. If a man should object to the prophecy of the lion eating straw like the ox (Isaiah 11. 7) on the ground that his alimentary canal was not adapted to the digestion of straw, what would you say?

13. What likeness do you notice between the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7. 24-27 and Isaiah 28. 14-19?

14. What correspondence do you find between John 7. 38 and Isaiah 32. 1-5?

15. Jesus said (Luke 7. 28) that he that was but little in the kingdom of God which he had come to set up, was greater than John the Baptist. In what words in Isaiah 32. 1-5 does the prophet speak of the greatness and helpfulness of the common man?

16. What other resemblances do you find between the character of Jesus as portrayed in the Gospels and the pictures of the Christ in Isaiah 9. 3-7; 11. 1-9, and 32. 1-5?



## THE INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK OF HEBREW PROPHECY

### CHAPTERS 13-23

Scholars are beginning to believe that the book of Isaiah served as a kind of treasury for preserving not only the actual words of the prophet himself, but also many anonymous prophecies that resembled Isaiah in their inspired and majestic tone. Some of the oracles or "burdens" in Chapters 13-23 certainly cannot be ascribed to Isaiah. The prophecies against Babylon, for instance (13. 1 to 14. 27 and 21. 1-10), would not have been the word of God in the mouth of Isaiah, for they refer to a nation that did not rise to be a menace to Israel for nearly a century after his death. And in defense of the great, sane, practical preacher of the eighth century we must insist that he did not neglect his task of proclaiming the needful truth for his own generation in order to write an oracle on a subject that would be of no interest or benefit to them. But although the authorship of the oracles on the foreign nations may be diverse, their outlook is much the same, and it is therefore proper to treat them all together as representing the attitude both of Isaiah and of the Hebrew prophets in general.

To the general reader the oracles concerning the foreign nations are the least interesting part of the book of Isaiah. They are turbid, and full of ceaseless predic-

tions of tempest and whirlwind and woe. They form a very jungle of prophecy. One of the reasons for their difficulty to the modern reader is their journalistic character. They assume a knowledge of the most recent events. They are like editorials addressed to people who have just read the telegraphic news on the front page. But much of the confusion would vanish, and we would come to a thrilled appreciation of these oracles, if by the study of history and a resolute effort of the imagination we could put ourselves back into the prophet's own day.

The great outstanding fact in the eighth century, B.C., was the rise of Assyria and its contest with Egypt for the lordship of the earth. In the latter part of the next century Assyria's place in the conflict with Egypt was taken by Babylon. The Hebrew people were simply compelled to live an international thought life by the fact that they feared being swallowed up by these world-conquering powers. The situation was similar to that in America during the World War when people who had previously given no thought to international affairs were suddenly, by the necessities of the case, drawn out into an eager interest in all the nations of the earth.

It was a common belief in those early days that a god's power was confined to the territory in which his people lived. Naaman, after being healed by Elisha, asked to be allowed to carry home from Palestine two mule loads of earth in order that he might worship the God of Israel on his own soil (2 Kings 5. 17). The Jews, to a degree at least, shared this idea. When David was

exiled by Saul he exclaimed, "They have driven me out this day that I should not cleave unto the inheritance of Jehovah, saying, Go, serve other gods" (1 Samuel 26. 19).

The masses of Israel also, to some extent, shared the thought of the ancient world that a god, like a bear fighting for her whelps, would stand up for his people, right or wrong, if only the proper sacrifices were not neglected, and they believed that when a nation was defeated their god likewise was defeated by the gods of their enemies. To the people in general the devastating advance of such a military genius as Tiglath-pileser or Nebuchadnezzar meant that Assyria and Babylon had gods of great power, and there was an overwhelming impulse to import images of these gods and find out the rites by which they were worshiped. They would justify such action on the ground of self-defense, and they would also flatter themselves, doubtless, that they were outgrowing the narrow-mindedness of their fathers and were becoming genuinely cosmopolitan in their intellectual life.

Isaiah confronted this false cosmopolitanism with the true cosmopolitanism. In his never-to-be-forgotten vision he had learned two things about God: first, that he was holy; and second, that the whole earth was full of his glory. Hence he believed that Jehovah could not be counted on to fight for his people when they were wrong, and that every nation was a sphere in which God was working out his mighty plans; and he insisted that the armies of the world were the unconscious instruments of Jehovah who, after using them for the pun-

ishment of Israel, would in turn bring them also to judgment (10. 5-14).

Faith in the one true God seemed for the time to hinge upon the wisdom and courage of a few great prophets. They occupied the place of a Foch in the World War. With the inspiration of great strategists they maintained that the devastating advance of these world powers upon Jehovah's land did not mean that Jehovah was weak, but that, on the contrary, he was strong,—quick to unmask the hollow mockery of Israel's insincere worship, and mighty to punish its oppression of the poor. When the people began to think that the Assyrian gods were as great as Jehovah, the prophets insisted that Jehovah himself was the sole ruler in Assyria and Babylon, as well as in Judah. Instead of building vain bulwarks to defend their narrow idea of Jehovah, they boldly led the people in thought out into the enemy's country and made them see there the operations of their God. This enlarged conception of Jehovah of course made them realize that God had gracious and far-reaching plans for all the nations of the earth, and that the whole world did not revolve around Judah. The change in religious thought which these men introduced was like the change from the Ptolemaic system that made the earth the center of the universe, to the Copernican system that reduced it to one of the planets revolving around the sun.

The wisdom and inspired audacity of these Hebrew prophets break upon us the more we contemplate them. Their accomplishment was similar to that of those great prophets of this generation when the faith of the

church seemed in danger of being overthrown by the revelations of geologic time, the immeasurable reach of the evolutionary process and the disturbing results of the historical study of the Bible. The modern prophets, like Isaiah, instead of giving way to panic before the threatening foes, contrived to make men see in them not enemies of the faith but witnesses to the true religion. They harnessed up the steeds of evolution and historical criticism and made them draw the gospel plow.

The oracles threatening judgment upon the foreign nations were intended primarily for the encouragement of Israel. The prophets knew that the people could not keep alive their faith in Jehovah unless they could believe that the savage powers that were oppressing them would in time go down. To say that Assyria or Babylon would be punished was simply another way of saying that God was righteous and merciful. It was just the same kind of thing that we have to-day in the prophecies of the overthrow of those great organizations of predatory greed that prey upon the people.

But it is unreasonable to suppose that the men who wrote these oracles had no purpose beyond the benefit of Israel. It is impossible to conceive of a prophet of Jehovah without a missionary impulse. The Spirit of God does not allow of provincialism. And, of course, there were many means of carrying these messages to the nations with whom they were concerned. Palestine was on the great caravan route between Asia and Africa. The nightly bivouacs of these caravans would form great opportunities for the prophets, and their words

would be eagerly heard. And all the more so when it was found that these Jewish seers were in no sense narrow partisans of their own people, but were preaching against Israel at the risk of their lives. The historical books are full of suggestions concerning the international reputation of the prophets. We have, for instance, the quaint story of how Ben-hadad sent an army to arrest Elisha, feeling that he could do nothing against Israel as long as the king had the benefit of the prophet's advice (2 Kings 6. 8-14). It is more than possible that Isaiah and his successors would have a fame that reached to Babylon and Assyria and Egypt. The man of truly international outlook is very apt to have an international audience.

It has been said by some of the critics that among the oracles against foreign nations there are some which are pagan in tone because they seem to gloat over the sorrows of Israel's enemies. It is not here asserted that they manifest the fullness of Christ's compassion for all men, but we ought at least to give them justice. On Armistice Day we all made merry with a kind of wild ecstasy. That did not necessarily mean that we were gloating over the humiliation and heartache of the defeated Germans. In many cases it was simply because our minds were filled with the glorious thought that the much desired peace had come. We ought not to expect a Biblical writer to see and feel all sides of reality at once. We must also remember that some of these oracles against foreign nations are singularly full of pity over the woes of their enemies. Take, for instance, these passages from the oracle against Moab: "My

heart crieth out for Moab" (15. 5). "Therefore I will weep with the weeping of Jazer for the vine of Sibmah; I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh" (16. 9).

There is a passage deemed by some to be of a very late date, which has such unique breadth and charity of world view that it ought not to be overlooked. The prophet says:

In that day shall there be an altar to Jehovah in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to Jehovah. . . . And Jehovah shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know Jehovah in that day. . . . In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria; and the Egyptians shall worship with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria; a blessing in the midst of the earth: for that Jehovah of hosts hath blessed them, saying, Blessed be Egypt, my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance (19. 19-25).

Here is a broad and kindly internationalism immeasurably ahead of that which obtains in the Christian nations of the world to-day. To come upon this phenomenon of a man many centuries before Christ, living the intellectual life of a true world citizen, is of itself a sufficient reward for going through these difficult and sombre oracles on the foreign nations. The

discovery is somewhat humbling to the modern man, for he has been disposed to think that the cosmopolitan is a product of our own times. How can we explain this breadth of view other than by the time-honored faith of the church that the prophets were inspired by Almighty God?

### SEARCH QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

(Answers to questions where no reference is given can be found in the preceding discussion)

1. Concerning what nations do we find oracles in Isaiah 13-23? Locate them, as far as possible, on the map.

2. Does it make Isaiah less of a prophet to suggest that the oracles against Babylon (13. 1 to 14. 27 and 21. 1-10) were written by some later seer when such oracles were needed to comfort the people who were suffering under its oppression? Would you respect a preacher of to-day who, instead of serving the men of his generation, would take time to write sermons meaningless to his own people, but applicable to conditions that are to arise two centuries hence?

3. What nation's ambitious designs constituted the most arresting fact on the political horizon in Isaiah's day?

4. What narrow and false ideas of Jehovah was it necessary for the prophets to correct before they could keep the faith of Israel alive in the face of the conquering power of a pagan nation?

5. In what words does Isaiah, in Chapter 10, say that Assyria is the instrument of God for the punishment of Israel?

6. In what words in Chapter 10 does the prophet say that the Assyrian, instead of regarding himself as the instrument of Jehovah, was boasting that by his own strength and by his own might he had conquered?

7. Where in Chapter 10 does the prophet say that the boasting Assyrian, after Jehovah has used him to discipline Israel, will in turn be punished for his pride?

8. According to Isaiah 13 to 23, is the outlook for the surrounding nations gloomy or cheerful? How does it compare in this respect with that of Amos 1. 1 to 2. 3?

9. Why, in your opinion, did Isaiah write these oracles of doom on the neighboring nations? for the sake of Judah or for the sake of the nations, or for both?



10. What good did the prophet hope to bring about by a warning of doom?

11. Suppose all the nations had repented and the doom had not come, would that, in your opinion, prove that Isaiah was a good prophet or a poor one?

12. Where do we find in Chapter 19 a prophecy of international co-operation and good fellowship that shows a marvelous freedom from the ancient race hatreds and prejudices?

13. Where in Chapter 19 do you find a verse that reminds you of Amos' insistence (9. 7) that God had been the Father of the Philistines and of the Syrians just as he had been the Father of Israel?

14. How does Jesus by example and precept fulfill and develop the cosmopolitan spirit of the prophets? Among many instances see, for example, Matthew 5. 13-16; 8. 10, 11; 25. 31-46; and especially 28. 16-20.

15. Isaiah had his burden of Egypt, Moab, Ammon, Philistia, etc. On the present conditions and future destiny of what countries would a prophet to our own land especially need to have inspired convictions? (The answer to this question is, of course, a matter of your own opinion.)

16. Do you think a prophet of to-day could know the future of his own land unless he also understood the conditions and tendencies in surrounding nations? Why?

17. What, in your opinion, would a modern prophet have to do in order to have God's mind as to the conditions, tendencies, and probable destiny of the great countries whose future is most linked up with his own?

## THE INVASION OF SENNACHERIB

CHAPTERS 22, 33, 36, 37 (701 B. C.)

As at the beginning of Isaiah's career, the threatening power of Assyria continued to be the principal feature in the political horizon down to the end of the century. Isaiah had been vehemently opposed to the making of a league with Assyria whereby Judah promised tribute for protection against Israel and Damascus. But when once the league was entered into he insisted that it should be maintained. He had said to the nation, Do not put your head into the Assyrian noose. But when they had made the alliance he said, Do not pull on the halter or you will be choked by it.

Ahaz died, bequeathing to his son Hezekiah the bitter yoke of Assyrian vassalage. When the tribute demanded became so heavy as to be almost unbearable there was always a party urging revolution and a league with Egypt. And constantly Egyptian emissaries, jealous of Assyria's overweening power, were seeking to induce the young king to throw off the Assyrian yoke and cast his lot in with them. The situation was somewhat like that which existed in Korean politics before the Russo-Japanese War when the one problem was whether it was safer to listen to the Russian ambassadors or to the Japanese.

It now became Isaiah's duty to stand firm against this Egyptian alliance. It must have been very difficult for him to set himself against the tide of patriotism

which swayed the hearts of his fellow countrymen. But he was an old man now, and accustomed to contend against prevailing tendencies. His character had been vitrified in a heroic mold by the fires of persecution. And so we read:

Woe to the rebellious children, saith Jehovah, that take counsel, but not of me; and that make a league, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; that set out to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to take refuge in the shadow of Egypt! Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the refuge in the shadow of Egypt your confusion (30. 1-3).

The prophet's opposition to a league with Egypt was based upon several grounds. In the first place he knew that Assyria would be infuriated by the news of a league between Judah and Egypt and that, whereas she might otherwise have let Judah alone, she would then at once prepare to march upon her. Buzzard wings are a poor shelter, it is true—he said, in essence—but once being there, keep the buzzard in a good humor if you can.

Again, the prophet opposed this alliance on the ground of the untrustworthiness of Egypt. He knew that she was a bragging nation, making many promises that she was unable to keep, a reed that would pierce their hands if they tried to lean upon it. A conspiracy with Egypt, he insisted, was a covenant with death and an agreement with Sheol (28. 18).

He knew, too, that while Egypt was too weak to

deliver them from Assyria, she was strong enough to corrupt Judah. And the prophets always opposed an alliance with heathen powers on account of the serious moral compromises that would be inevitable. They warned the people against uniting with other evil forces that proposed to deliver them from the evil forces that were threatening them. It was as though the opponents of child labor were to make an alliance with the liquor power to secure good legislation.

Isaiah deemed this league a practical admission by Judah that the power of Jehovah was not sufficient to protect his people. But he himself believed that the inspiration and the courage that they would derive from their superior conception of Jehovah would make them difficult to conquer, and that if they obeyed God's laws the surrounding people would have no motive for trying to conquer them. And so he kept saying in varying form his life-long message. "In returning and in rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (30. 15). "Trust ye in Jehovah forever; for in Jehovah, even Jehovah, is an everlasting rock" (26. 4). The prophet would have the people look up with him to Jehovah, and say in faith, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee" (26. 3). This exhortation to be quiet was not at that time, of course, an exhortation to do the easy thing. Isaiah was not an apostle of the easy chair. On the contrary, to resist the panic of terror, and to trust God, required the strongest possible putting forth of will power.

The prophet's message at this time seems to have

been very distasteful to the people. They were wearied by the everlasting repetition of such "Sunday-school politics." "Whom will he teach knowledge?" say they; "and whom will he make to understand the message? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts? For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little" (28. 9, 10). Isaiah's turning of their words is peculiarly vivid. He says, You are tired of my simple, plain words? You say that I treat you like children? Well, God will give you a change. "By men of strange lips and with another tongue will he speak to this people," and the lips will speak the curses of a savage conqueror. You are tired of the monotony of God's gracious warnings? You shall have a change, but it will be the monotony of his judgments, a weary monotone of suffering and woe.

The death of the Assyrian monarch Sargon, in 705, and the accession of Sennacherib, afforded a good opportunity to rebel. This movement was encouraged by the fact that at this time the great Ethiopian Tirhakah was coming into power and manifesting a vigor that soon made him lord of Egypt and an aggressive contestant for domination in the world's politics.

Accordingly Philistia, Edom, Moab, and Judah formed an alliance, and declared their independence. Judah, doubtless owing to the superior ability of its king, and perhaps as an added inducement to make it join the conspiracy, was placed at the head of the confederation. No doubt it seemed a very patriotic thing

to do, and enthusiasm ran high. The plan seemed especially wise in view of the fact that at this time Merodach-baladan, king of Babylon, also rebelled against Assyria, and gave serious trouble to Sennacherib. He had doubtless had a part in encouraging the insurrection of Judah. We read that he sent an embassy to congratulate Hezekiah on his recovery from sickness (Chapter 39), and this very act was probably inspired by a covert purpose to suggest the rebellion.

The prophet's forebodings were all too quickly realized. In 701 Sennacherib, having already subdued Babylon, marched west and conquered Tyre and Sidon, and then, taking the route that lay along the plain skirting the Mediterranean, he went south intending to reduce the cities of Philistia, Ashkelon, and Ekron, and finally Jerusalem. We have the record of the journey from one of Sennacherib's own inscriptions. He tells us that the Egyptians came out with Philistia in numbers innumerable, but he soon brought them low and thus Ekron and Ashkelon were left to his mercy.

After this Sennacherib, who doubtless realized how difficult it would be to take Jerusalem, set about the destruction of all the smaller fortified towns of Judah. He tells us that he laid forty-six of them low. And with the cities he devastated the vineyards and the olive groves and all the beauty of the land. Men were compelled to live upon curds made from the milk of the few sheep and cows that had been left by the invaders, and upon the wild honey which they found in the

crevices of the rocks. Thus was fulfilled the word of the Lord spoken by Isaiah thirty or more years before: "In that day will the Lord shave with a razor that is hired in the parts beyond the river, even with the king of Assyria, the head and the hair of the feet; and it shall also consume the beard" (7. 20).

One feels impelled to stop here, leaving the frightened people of Jerusalem and its king shut up, as Sennacherib says in his own inscription, "like a bird in a cage," and contemplate for a moment this remarkable fulfillment of the prophet's previous predictions (7. 18-20; 8. 5-8). Isaiah, who had been the object of ridicule for a lifetime, was at length vindicated. The Assyrian had come! True, he had not come quite so soon as the prophet expected, nor by the exact route that he had pictured, but he had come. The logic of events had proven the divine wisdom of Isaiah's predictions.

After the land had been devastated and the "daughter of Zion was left as a booth in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city" (1. 7, 8), the king of Assyria sent his Rabshakeh, or commander-in-chief, to Jerusalem to demand its surrender. How terrifying this event must have been we can hardly imagine. It was as though the entire British fleet should some morning heave in sight before the harbor of Havana and demand its surrender. The Assyrians had laid Samaria in ruins, and all the cities of that portion of the world had fallen under the might of Sennacherib. No wonder Hezekiah rent his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth.

Rabshakeh came and stood by the conduit of the

upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field, the very place where years before Isaiah had been sent to warn Ahaz of his coming. But the prophet no longer needs to follow the king about like a suppliant. His life of heroic ministry and the fulfillment of his predictions have made a throne for him. The sovereign now seeks the prophet. Hezekiah at once sends a deputation to Isaiah, asking him not for a prediction, but for a prayer. He trusts that the man of God may turn away the anger of Jehovah and persuade him to mercy.

We now see the phenomenon which is so often apparent in the whole course of Hebrew prophēcy. The seers during all the time of self-confidence and security threaten doom; but when the stroke falls they change their tone and become angels of consolation. And so Isaiah, instead of rebuking the king, sends back a taunt song against Assyria:

The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. Whom hast thou defied and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel. . . . Because of thy raging against me, and because thine arrogancy is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest (37. 22, 23, 29).

The Assyrian records confirm the sudden turning back of Sennacherib. Whether it was a great pestilence



that suddenly smote his army—a very natural thing in view of their recent contact with the Egyptians where pestilence was always rife (Amos 4. 10)—or whether Sennacherib heard a disquieting rumor, as seems to be predicted in Isaiah's own words, or both, we do not know. But at any rate Isaiah's words were fulfilled in a most dramatic fashion. Some mysterious cause moved Sennacherib to raise the siege, and Israel was saved. Doubtless this was no greater fulfillment than was the slow and more commonplace accomplishment of his words in other instances, but the people are more impressed by such sudden and dramatic occurrences.

In his vision Isaiah had heard the Lord saying, "Go, and . . . make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes." And so it had come to pass. His warning to Ahaz was a failure, and yet when his prophecy was at length fulfilled we see that really the efforts of the prophet had not failed after all, for in their darkness the people turned to the old seer whose words have been so signally vindicated. So it is always with the man who has God's message, but who finds the people rebellious and unwilling to hear. When the unheeded warning has its dread fulfillment they turn to him as a true prophet, and recognize his words as a message from Jehovah.

And thus the long life of the great seer had its fitting climax. He now disappears from view. But the influence of his words in the light of their signal vindication in history was only just beginning.

## ISAIAH'S POLITICAL POLICY ILLUSTRATED BY MODERN ANALOGIES

One of the tasks of the interpreter of prophecy is to point out the modern analogies to the conditions which the prophets faced. It is doubtful whether anyone can feel the thrill and the glow of Isaiah's great message who does not see in Assyria and Egypt the symbols of great rival powers that threaten the kingdom of God in his own day.

It may be well to say, in the first place, that there is in every age not only an Assyria, but also at the same time an Egypt. The church, for instance, in defending itself from one enemy of righteousness, is continually tempted to flee into the arms of another enemy just as dangerous.

The Assyria that threatens to overrun us to-day consists of that ominous multitude of economic, social, and religious radicals who, with no eyes for the values inherent in our present social order and with keen eyes for its glaring defects, seek in the name of progress to destroy it all. It consists of the Lenines and Trotskys who would violently dispossess the farmer and the mill owner and turn their property over to the Soviet, the religious radicals who would burn our Bible as an outgrown superstition and make a mockery of our divine Christ, and the social radicals who would open up a window in our courthouses where divorces would be as accessible as postage stamps.

And what, on the other hand, is the Egypt of to-day to which we are prone to fly for refuge from these bomb-throwing enemies of our settled order? The Egypt of

to-day is the reactionary conservatism that in its eagerness to hold to the good in our present institutions holds to all the bad. It is the big business that in order to increase its earnings treats its employees like machines and seeks to stifle public protest by muzzling free speech, by lying propaganda in the newspapers, and by ostentatious gifts to charity. It is the religious conservatism that gives the name of infidel to every man who dares to think progressively. It is the social conservatism that calls every reformer a Bolshevist.

Between these two is our modern Israel that is supposed, on the one hand, to stand for the sacred inheritance that has come to us from the past and, on the other, to have the eager progressive mind of Jesus. Israel is afraid of radical Assyria. Conservative Egypt, too, is in abject terror of it. It has a guilty conscience and has good reason to be afraid of its dynamite. And so Egypt pleads for a defensive alliance with Israel. It promises to endow our colleges, build our churches, and fill our mission treasuries, if only we keep silent on the social gospel and never hurt its feelings by exposing the wrongs of the workingman. It covers up its greed by calling unctuously for the "old-time religion" and "the simple gospel."

And how often, alas, does Israel yield to temptation and seek Egyptian money in order to convert Assyria. But as soon as the radicals see that the church has compromised with predatory wealth they become ten-fold more dangerous. They stop their ears to its eloquent preachers, despise its missions, and make it a very religion to fight religion.

Thus to-day, as in every age, the church needs an Isaiah who will insist that the only safety comes through that calm faith in God that holds sacredly every precious inheritance that has come from the past, but dares to think fearlessly on every subject, and to fight bravely for the application of the law of love to all our economic and social relations.

### SEARCH QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

1. The people became tired of Isaiah's everlasting warnings against a league with Egypt against Assyria, and they asked him with irritation whether he repeated himself so often because he thought they had the minds of infants. Find the place in Chapter 28.

2. Isaiah by a swift turn said to the people, If you are tired of my simplicity and plainness, God will give you a change. Find the place in Chapter 28 where the prophet states what this change will be.

3. Judah, with underhanded and lying diplomacy, had been making a league with Egypt while all the time pretending to be loyal to Assyria. They probably called it a covenant for the securing of national life and liberty. In Chapter 28 the prophet calls it a covenant with what?

4. Where in Chapters 28 and 29 does the prophet suggest that the only foundation for national prosperity is justice and square dealing, and that everything else is doomed to destruction?

5. In opposing the alliance with Assyria against northern Israel and Damascus the prophet had said, "Take heed and be quiet" (7. 4). Where in Chapter 30, in opposing an alliance with Egypt against Assyria, does he in different words repeat the same message?

6. The people, instead of being quiet and confident in the Lord, said, "No, but we will flee upon horses." By what strong and picturesque retort does Isaiah, in Chapter 30, turn their own words upon them?

7. Isaiah at this time seemed to have a constant succession of apparently contradictory visions, now of great calamity and now of sudden and wonderful victory. Find in Chapter 29 illustrations of this sudden changing of scene from dark to bright, and from bright to dark. This constant shifting in the prophet's mind between

visions of coming darkness and coming light must have been very perplexing to him. But what of the outcome? Was the invasion of Sennacherib, with its sudden withdrawal, a fulfillment of these contradictory premonitions?

8. What is the date of the invasion of Sennacherib? How many years had elapsed since Isaiah in 735 had prophesied that if they put their trust in the Assyrian he would end by invading their country? (See preceding discussion.)

9. Find in Isaiah 8 a prophecy uttered many years before which was fulfilled in this destructive and terrible invasion of the Assyrians.

10. The Assyrian commander stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field (36. 2). Who previously had stood there, and on what occasion? See Chapter 7.

11. Does the speech of the Assyrian commander in Chapter 36 strike you as shrewd, or otherwise? What parts of it are especially effective?

12. In Chapter 7 Isaiah went beseechingly to the king. How are the tables turned in Chapter 37?

13. Under the circumstances of extreme danger and apparently utter helplessness in the hands of the Assyrians, was Isaiah's oracle of aggressive defiance (37. 22-29) mere boasting or a supreme illustration of faith in God?

14. As you study Chapter 37 what do you find in the attitude of the king, the prophet, and his group of loyal followers, that made it possible for God at this time to deliver Jerusalem from destruction at the hands of the apparently irresistible power of the Assyrians?

15. What enemies of modern Christianity, in your opinion, might aptly be symbolized by Assyria and Egypt?



THE HERALD OF THE RESTORATION





# THE YOSEMITE VALLEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

(Isaiah 40-66)

## LITERARY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BOOK

When one passes from the study of the three great prophets of the eighth century, B.C., into Isaiah 40-66, it is like the experience of a traveler who has gone to bed amid the wintry majesties of the western mountains; but when he raises the curtain of his car in the morning he looks out upon the orange groves of California and breathes an air laden with the perfume of flowers. Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah, while containing many flashes of hope and sunlight, are predominantly severe in tone. There is at times something terrible about them. But while there are some stern passages in Isaiah 40-66, the Prophet of the Exile has given us, for the most part, one long spring morning full of sunshine and joy. We have in him a great renaissance of faith, and a hope which shoots up like a geyser. He illustrates the truth laid down by the apostle: "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12. 11). Here is a garden of the peaceable fruits that came from the chastening of the exile.

It is a curious fact that the gladdest of all the prophecies has sprung out of the saddest of all the experiences

of Israel as a nation, the Babylonian exile. It is paralleled by the fact that the most comforting of all the words of Jesus, the great passage in John 14 beginning, "Let not your heart be troubled," were spoken under the shadow of Gethsemane and the cross. But with all its springtime beauty and all its tender comfort, there is an impressive majesty about this prophecy. It may very well be called the Yosemite Valley of the Old Testament.

The book is very difficult to divide into sections. Its central ideas are simple and clear, but they perpetually return upon themselves. It is like a piece of music with ever-recurring refrains. The prophet looks up toward the heavens and rejoices in the mighty saving power of Jehovah; he looks at the Suffering Servant of Jehovah and proclaims his coming dominion over the world; he glances at Cyrus, the rising Median conqueror in the east, and hails him as the arm of the Lord; then he casts a dark glance at Babylon and announces its speedy destruction. These ideas in differing order constantly recur in waves of poetry welling up from a spirit stirred by one of the tidal movements of God.

We may roughly divide the prophecy into three great sections: 40-48, The Announcement of the Return; 49-53, The Suffering Servant; 54-66, The Ideal Jerusalem. This division is useful as suggesting the main contents of the three sections, but it is by no means inevitable.

#### AUTHORSHIP

When an ancient Hebrew prophecy bore at its beginning the name of a certain seer, and for various

good reasons material from other sources was added, it was not thought necessary to mention the origin of this new material. Isaiah 37 to 39, for instance, follows right along after the prophecies of Isaiah, and a modern might suppose that it came from his pen. But anyone can see by looking up the references that these chapters were taken almost bodily from 2 Kings 18 to 20. They were added by someone who rightly felt that the historical information furnished by them would throw great light on the prophecy. The same thing has happened in the case of Isaiah 40-66. It was probably added as a sequel or fulfillment of his prophecies. Practically all scholars, both conservative and radical, agree that its inspired and wonderful messages were written during and after the exile.

The reasons for this view are that the whole background of the prophecy is exilic. It assumes that Israel is now in Babylon. It calls attention to the rise of Cyrus as a fact which is fulfilling the ancient prophecies, and which justifies new and hopeful predictions of swift deliverance. The moment we accept the view that this book was written by some fellow captive, pale with the malaria that probably afflicted these exiled mountaineers in the flat and marshy country of Babylonia, it begins to have a human appeal that it could not have if it were the product of the magic clairvoyance of a man who had never felt the miseries of slavery in a foreign land.

And surely, as we have suggested before, it would not add to the credit of Isaiah to assume that he turned aside from the great battle in the eighth century in

which he was engaged, to write a prophecy that would have been poison to a generation already too easy going and optimistic, but which was especially applicable to situations that would arise two centuries hence. No one would have respected General Foch if it had been known that during the World War he had taken time from his critical task to outline the plan of campaign for France in a struggle which he foresaw she would face in two hundred years. Everyone would know that the best way for him to help the France of two centuries hence would be to do his immediate task in such a superb and heroic fashion that men for all time to come would be inspired by his spirit.

It should be said, in conclusion, that when the mass of modern scholars say that this prophecy of the return sprang out of the exile, they do not assert that the prophecy was written after the event, but rather that *it was written at the time when its delivery would be most effective in accomplishing its inspired purpose.*

## THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE RETURN

(Chapters 40-48)

“Methinks I scent the morning air.”—*Hamlet*

We must picture the prophet among his fellow captives in Babylon. The night is very dark, and men are saying, Hath God forgotten? “Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favorable no more” (Psalm 77. 7)? There was no resource but prayer, and the reading of the old prophets. They were far away from the temple where they could go through the forms of sacrifice and worship. They were shut up for means of grace to the study of the Scriptures, and to the contemplation of the glory and majesty of God as it appeared in the stars which they would have time to contemplate after their day of drudgery in the fields of their over-lords.

But as they mused over the sombre oracles of such men as Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and reflected upon the wonderful way in which their prophecies of doom had been fulfilled, they would have a redoubled sense of the divine authority of these writings, and hence would be inspired to hope that the frequent flashes of prediction concerning a wonderful day of return and restoration would also be fulfilled. The same mercy that had brought down the Jewish kings from their thrones for oppressing the poor and outraging the

downtrodden, would also be exercised in their behalf if they would only wait upon God.

Moreover, these exiles who had previously been so overawed by the greatness of Babylon had been brought now to close quarters with this mighty power. Like a country lad dazzled by the tinsel of a city theater who is afterward taken behind the scenes and disillusioned, they, too, had been shown what pitiful, painted creatures these actors in the imperial drama were. They had seen the sewerlike corruption of Babylon and its internal strife and treachery. They knew that as sure as God was God he must destroy the city and the despotism of which it was the center.

In addition the news was brought by couriers of the advance upon Babylon of the great Median conqueror Cyrus, who seemed to have a magic power to carry all things before him. And we can imagine that when this cloud, the size of a man's hand, appeared in the horizon indicating that at last the hope of restoration might be fulfilled there came over this prophet such a tidal wave of reassured faith in the goodness, power, and eternal majesty of God as cannot be described in human language. This sense of God which came to him was so great and wonderful that it is eight chapters before he definitely mentions the destruction of Babylon and the return of the exiles to their native land. His new discovery of God is far more impressive to him than his new confidence that the captivity is at an end. God is so great that the nations seem to him but a drop in the bucket, and the isles are but an atom in his hands.

The Babylonian rulers that had so awed and terrified him and his fathers—they are as nothing, “yea, they have not been planted; yea, they have not been sown” (40. 24). Instead of being rooted firmly and forever they are so ephemeral that it is as though they had never taken root at all.

It is impossible for him to conceive that this new-found God should ever forget or be discouraged. “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard? The everlasting Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary” (40. 28). Of course God will bless his people. “They that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint” (40. 31).

The obstacles that face Israel are as nothing. “Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low” (40. 4). The thirsty terrors of the desert disappear from before his face. Jehovah will “open rivers on the bare heights” (41. 18) where there is now not so much as a trickling stream. The utter disorganization and helplessness of Israel is almost an advantage because it gives an opportunity for the display of the divine majesty. “Fear not, thou worm Jacob. . . . Behold, I have made thee to be a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth; thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff” (41. 14, 15). Fire and flood are no terror whatever. “When thou passeth through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the

fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (43. 2).

The huge and awe-inspiring worship of Babylon, with its great temples and its gods reputed to have conquered the world, becomes an object of mockery to the prophet. He makes merry over their worship. He taunts the idol makers who have a sudden rush of business when the menace of the invasion of Cyrus darkens the horizon, and jeers at people who think that gods that have to be held upright by chains can hold up their worshipers against adversity. He says, You must carry Bel and Nebo around in your processions, but Jehovah carries his people from their birth (46. 1-4). He laughs at the imbecility of the man who goes to the forest for a tree, and with part of it makes a fire to warm his hands and to cook his broth, and the residue thereof he maketh a god (44. 14-17). He challenges all the worshipers of idols to come near, and demands of them to tell anything their gods had done in the past, to predict anything that is to happen in the future, or do anything whatsoever, either good or bad (41. 21-24).

In this heavenly bravado facing the whole great world the prophet foreshadows Paul's challenge to the universe in the eighth of Romans, where he says:

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things? . . . For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things pres-



ent, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8. 31, 32, 38, 39)

### SEARCH QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

A new sense of the immeasurable greatness and glory of God seems to have come over this prophet like a tidal wave. Find passages showing how this wonderful new sense of God made him see and feel:

1. The smallness of the earth (Chapter 40).
2. The insignificance of earthly judges and dignitaries (Chapter 40).
3. The impossibility of thinking that God would fail or become discouraged in carrying out his great purposes (Chapter 41).
4. His obligation to bring God's message not merely to Israel but to the farthest bounds of his little world (Chapter 41).
5. The certainty that God would answer prayer (Chapter 40).
6. The certainty that in spite of the insignificance of Israel, Jehovah would mightily use his servant for his great purposes (Chapter 41 and elsewhere).
7. The certainty that Jehovah would amazingly deliver them under the most difficult circumstances (Chapters 41, 43, and elsewhere).
8. The certainty that the great conqueror rising in the east was Jehovah's destined instrument for ruling the nations (Chapters 41 and 45).
9. The certainty that, in particular, Cyrus would overthrow Babylon, the great oppressor of Israel (Chapter 47).
10. The certainty that the exiles would be restored to their home (Chapter 45).

Find passages showing how this tidal wave of the Spirit also emboldened the prophet to:

11. Mock at the nations in their feverish activity in the manufacture of idols on the approach of Cyrus (Chapter 41).
12. Joke over the imbecility of the idolaters in making out of the same material fuel and divinities (Chapter 44).
13. Challenge the representatives of the idols to show that their

gods could tell what had happened in the past, or predict the future, or do anything whatsoever, good or bad (Chapter 41).

. . . . .  
14. When John the Baptist, who likewise was a herald of the dawn, was asked to describe himself, what words from Isaiah 40 did he use? See John 1.

15. With the prophet's message, compare the great passage where Paul defies the universe to harm the soul that has fled to Jesus for refuge (Romans 8. 33-39). A most interesting modern poetic résumé of the message of Isaiah 40-48, combined with that of Paul in Romans 8, is found in the great hymn, "How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord."

## THE SUFFERING SERVANT OF JEHOVAH

(Chapters 49-53)

In the previous chapter we have seen how the prophet looked to Cyrus, the Median conqueror, as the servant of Jehovah for the liberation of his people. But we note that he called him God's vulture (46. 11). He had rough work on hand. It was his business to pounce upon Babylon and bring to an end its oppressive despotism. The finer and more spiritual work of bringing in the new day is reserved for another servant (42. 1), and after Chapter 49 Cyrus entirely disappears from view, and this more spiritual servant of Jehovah is at the center of vision. He seems to take the place in our prophet's mind of the great Messianic king of the previous prophets.

We have here illustrated the way in which the great prophets of Israel grew in their conception in the light of experience, without throwing away or discarding the treasures of the past. The previous prophets had given us the wonderful picture of the imperial king conquering the world and converting it (Isaiah 9. 1-7; 11. 1-5). This man does not throw that conception into the discard. He preserves all its inspired elements. But his king rises from his throne, lays aside his purple garments and his scepter, puts on his working clothes and, like Atlas, takes the world upon his shoulders. He bears not only the burdens of men, but their sins.

How did the prophet come to this deeper and more spiritual notion of the way in which the servant of God was to save the world? He came to it as men come to all new revelations of God, through experience. When the Jews went into captivity it seemed to them that they had lost all influence and standing in the world, and that the hopes of the prophets that pictured Jehovah's king as sitting upon the throne of David forever were finally brought to naught. And yet, in spite of this terrible strain upon their faith, many of them remained loyal to Jehovah, and lived among their captors lives of triumphant faith. As a result they found to their astonishment that these captors, in spite of their wealth and luxury, resorted to them for comfort and guidance in times of trouble, just as the slave owners in America sometimes listened wistfully to the joyful hymns and the prevailing prayers of the blacks. The story in the book of Daniel of how the distracted Nebuchadnezzar could find no one but a Hebrew to interpret his dreams when the visions of his head troubled him, is a dramatic illustration of what was happening all over the kingdom wherever devout Hebrews were found.

This was a glad surprise to the Hebrews. Some of their more discerning minds could even see that they were really having more influence as captives there at the center of the world's authority than they had had when their own king was reigning in Jerusalem. As they meditated upon this fact, doubtless with a thrill of inspiration, it suddenly occurred to them that exactly this had been the experience of all the great

prophets that had gone before. They had come into power only after they had faced the shame and the spitting and the martyrdom. And one day there flashed over the mind of this man, as by a direct revelation from heaven, the conviction that the suffering and martyrdom of his servant was God's method for saving the world. Then all at once the dreadful contradictions of their present experience and the terrible riddle of their history had a new meaning, and all these dark facts arranged themselves together in harmony with one great purpose of Jehovah. Israel was to be the suffering nation and was to become the reigning nation through its martyr-like loyalty to the truth. It was not by dazzling the world that they were to convert it, but by bearing the burdens of the world and the sins of the world. Thus we see that the prophet made, as it were, a lantern slide of his own experience of gaining power to help men through suffering for them, and projected it big upon the curtain of the future as God's missionary plan for the world.

How wonderfully the various descriptions of the servant of Jehovah seem to fit the character and the career of Jesus! He did not "cry, nor lift up his voice, nor cause it to be heard in the street." No loud, showman-like methods were used in his efforts to save the world. He did not break "a bruised reed," nor quench "a dimly burning wick" (42. 2, 3). It was too light a thing for him that he should be God's servant "to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel." He felt that God had given him "for a light to the Gentiles" that he might be his "salvation unto

the end of the earth" (49. 6). In his loyalty to the truth, when Jehovah spoke to him the words that would be unwelcome to his generation, he "was not rebellious, neither turned away backward." He gave his back "to the smiters" and his cheeks "to them that plucked off the hair." He hid not his face "from shame and spitting" (50. 5, 6). He grew up before the Lord "as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground (53. 2), such an environment as even led Nathanael to exclaim with disgust, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth" (John 1. 46)? When he hung upon the cross his enemies pointed to his fate as an evidence that all his pretensions to be the beloved Son of God were untrue. But as the centuries have rolled by since his crucifixion the peoples of the earth have increasingly taken up the words of the ancient prophet: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (53. 5). And just as the Servant in the prophet's vision after his suffering is to receive "a portion with the great" and to "divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors (53. 12), so increasingly Christ comes to influence and to power over the nations.

The very heart of the New Testament is embodied in Isaiah 53. We study it with a kind of awe, as though we were on Golgotha, and heard a voice saying, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Here is Paul's great idea that men are saved through the cross. Here is the

Revelator's dream that it is the "Lamb that hath been slain" who is to have all power and dominion (Revelation 5. 12). Here is Jesus' own saying, "This is my body. . . . This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins" (Matthew 26. 26-28).

That this prophecy through the providence of God was supremely fulfilled in Christ there can be no doubt whatever. That it was inspired as a foreshadowing of Christ we steadfastly believe. As to whether, however, the prophet visualized in his imagination a single person is another problem. Many of the most devout expounders of the Bible, after prolonged study of the various passages in which the phrase "the Servant of Jehovah" occurs, are very sure that he visualized an ideal Israel, somewhat as Paul visualized the church as the body of Christ. Others are convinced that in the 53d of Isaiah, at least, he visualized at the center of this ideal Israel a single great personality. Important issues do not hang upon the decision between these two views. The Revelator says, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19. 10). That is to say, what Jesus *was* is what the prophets in essence were reaching out after. And we do not greatly help our cause by making out that the testimony of Jesus is also the letter of prophecy. Indeed, in attempting to do so we often override the plain facts, fail to convince our hearers, and, more serious than all, obscure the deeper spiritual fact that Hebrew prophecy is full of divinely inspired foreshadowings of the ideals and methods of Christ, and of his salvation. The main

point is that by divine inspiration this prophet had hit upon the principle by which Christ was to redeem the world, namely, through suffering and through the cross. This is a veritable miracle of spiritual insight.

### SEARCH QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

(In this lesson we have with deliberate purpose, and for good reasons, called attention to the extraordinary fulfillment in Jesus before taking up the question of the precise picture in the imagination of the prophet.)

1. As Cyrus, the servant of Jehovah, who is described as God's vulture (46. 11), disappears from view, another servant is brought to the front in 49. 1-7; 50. 4-9; 52. 13 to 53. 12. In what one outstanding particular does his work differ from that of the great military conqueror, Cyrus?

2. Jesus was particularly unostentatious and quiet in his methods (John 5. 10-13; Matthew 8. 1-4). Can you find any words in Isaiah 42. 1-4 that might be used to describe this disposition?

3. Jesus was notably merciful with guilty souls reaching out for a better life. What correspondence to this do you find in the picture of the servant of Jehovah in Isaiah 42. 1-4?

4. Jesus, while mild in his methods, was invincible in his determination. What words in Isaiah 42. 1-4 might be used to describe this characteristic?

5. Jesus insisted on being more than a mere Jewish leader. He deemed himself called of God to be the Light of the whole world. Where do you find the same thought in Isaiah 49. 1-6?

6. Jesus was mocked and spit upon by the soldiers. Do you find anything corresponding to this in the picture of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 50. 4-9?

7. What words in Chapter 53 might be used to describe Jesus' silence in the presence of his judges (John 19. 9; Luke 23. 9)?

8. The rulers jeered at the idea of a man who could not deliver himself from the cross claiming to be the Son of God. They felt that the cross was a sign of God's displeasure with Jesus. What words in Chapter 53 might be used to describe this attitude?

9. What other experiences of Christ described in Mark 14. 53 to 15. 47 could be aptly expressed in the words of Isaiah 53?



10. What is the outstanding element in the picture of the great Deliverer in Isaiah 52. 13 to 53. 12, which is absent from the picture of the Messianic King in Isaiah 11. 1-5?

. . . . .

11. What experiences of the exiles themselves might have led them to conclude that the world was to be brought to faith in Jehovah through the sufferings of his faithful servants? (See Daniel 3. 1-30; 6. 4-28.)

12. Examine Isaiah 41. 8-11; 42. 1-4, and 49. 1-7, and decide whether the servant of Jehovah in these passages is Israel, or the ideal Israel, or a faithful group, or an individual.

13. If it should be concluded that the writer of Isaiah 52. 13 to 53. 12 had in his imagination an ideal Israel rather than a single person, would this force you to say that the passage is not a prophecy of Christ? or would you say that in spirit it is a prophecy of Christ although not in the letter? If it were also a prophecy in the letter would that make it any more a prophecy of Christ? Does the writer of Revelation say that the testimony of Jesus is the letter or the spirit of prophecy (19. 10)? The New Testament says that Joseph of Arimathea was a righteous man (Luke 23. 50, 51). With whom, according to Isaiah 53, is the Servant's grave to be made? If this mechanical discrepancy were removed, do you think Isaiah 53 would be really any more convincing as a prophecy of Christ?

## THE IDEAL JERUSALEM

(Chapters 54 to 66)

We have already considered that part of the Exile's Book of Consolation which contains the prophet's wonderful adventure of faith in believing that Babylon was to be destroyed and the exiles to be returned to their native land, and the succeeding section which voices his conviction that the new day would not come until the Servant of Jehovah had with his blood given to the cause "the last full measure of devotion." It now remains for us to glance at the prophet's statement of the conditions which men must fulfill before the ideal day can be set up in their midst, and also to consider some aspects of the picture of that ideal social order which the prophet paints.

### THE PREREQUISITES OF THE NEW SOCIAL ORDER

When the exiles returned from Babylon they seemed to have been well cured of idolatry. But with some of them their zeal for maintaining complete separation from the heathen manifested itself in a fanatical insistence on the peculiar outward forms of Judaism. The prophet sets himself bravely against this tendency to overemphasize the sacredness of the temple worship and the importance of outward religious observances. "Thus saith Jehovah, Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what manner of house will ye build unto me? and what place shall be my rest? . . .

but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word" (66. 1, 2). These words are rendered doubly sacred by the fact that they were quoted by Stephen just before his stoning. The thought is the same as that which Jesus emphasized when he said to the woman at the well, "Neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. . . . God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4. 21, 24).

Indeed the conditions of salvation for men and for society set forth by these concluding chapters of Isaiah are in all respects amazingly similar to those proclaimed by Jesus and his apostles. The prophets say: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (55. 1). Salvation is not to be obtained through sacrifices and offerings; neither is it to be merited by outward works of righteousness. It is a free gift.

But the gift cannot be received without repentance. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (55. 7). This repentance is especially to be manifested in the righting of social wrongs. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen; to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy healing shall spring forth speed-

ily" (58. 6, 8). Jehovah will be pleased not by fasting from food, but by fasting from unjust gains gotten at the expense of the poor; or, as we would put it to-day, the true way to fast is to fast from excessive dividends that come from underpaid workmen and from profiteering.

In immediate connection with the prophet's demand for the release of the heavy burdens on the poor, is his demand that the Sabbath be kept holy. Some moderns might think that in passing from the insistence on justice to the poor to an exhortation on Sabbath keeping the prophet was passing from the essential to the non-essential. But the prophet saw deeper. He knew that Sabbath keeping was a matter of elemental morality, for unless men by common consent set apart and sacredly observe times for rest, worship, and meditation upon the law of God, society inevitably sinks into gross materialism, and gross materialism always leads to the oppression of the poor and social immorality.

It is most interesting to note the paradox in the prophet's words about the Sabbath. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, and the holy of Jehovah honorable; and shalt honor it, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in Jehovah; and I will make thee to ride upon the high places of the earth" (58. 13, 14). They were not to make the Sabbath a pleasure day, and yet they were to make it a day of pleasure. One fancies he sees here another protest against the

legalism that had begun to creep into the life of the people. The prophet did not wish what we call a Puritan Sabbath. He wished a day in which Puritanism was transfigured into joyous delight and worship and social service. Or, in other words, he was looking forward to one of the Sabbaths of Jesus, full of the thrill of a heavenly holiday in which the poor were blessed, the sick healed, and all men walked in the exhilaration of the Spirit's presence.

The keeping of the Sabbath would give men time for intercessory prayer, another condition of bringing in the new day which the prophet greatly emphasizes. "Ye that are Jehovah's remembrancers, take ye no rest, and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (62. 6, 7). And he himself will set the example, for he says, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth" (62. 1). This man had fully learned the lesson that it is not by the sword but by intercession before the throne of God that men bring in the kingdom. Here again we almost seem to be in the presence of Jesus with his great parables about the omnipotent might of persistent prayer (Luke 11. 1-13; 18. 1-8).

#### THE NATURE OF THE IDEAL ENVIRONMENT

We evidently do not have in these chapters a blueprint of the ideal conditions. This is not a textbook of sociology, but a series of poems written at different

times and in different moods. The marvelously fresh and new ideas of the prophet are emerging from his Jewish imagination like a butterfly from a cocoon, and the picture which he draws embodies the cocoon as well as the butterfly. The cocoon here is the picture of a glorified Judaism at the center of the world; the butterfly is the thought of the reign of God in the hearts of all men and the renewal of the earth which this reign makes possible. And it is on the butterfly that we must focus our attention. The author of the book of Revelation knew how best to use these poems, for he made their wonderful separate phrases and pictures the building material which he pieced together after his own fashion in the construction of his New Jerusalem. And this is the true purpose of great poetry such as the prophet has given us. It is to stimulate our imaginations so that we may freely picture the City of God in such fashion as is most helpful to us.

Two points shine out clearly in the prophet's picture. First, the ideal Jerusalem is primarily and essentially a spiritual society. He had no faith in the saving power of a mere outward environment. He says:

The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the year of Jehovah's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that

mourn in Zion, to give unto them a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness (61. 1-3).

And as the Spirit of the Lord was upon him to do this work, evidently he expected the work primarily to consist in the imparting of that Spirit to men.

But when men repent and begin universally to work righteousness and wait upon God with intercession for themselves and others, the prophet foresees that Jehovah will appear and work miracles in the reconstruction of their environment. The pictures of ideal physical conditions, then, are in a very real sense to be taken literally. When he says, they "shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations" (61. 4) he surely means real brick and stone. And when he says, "I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beasts of the fields shall honor me, the jackals and the ostriches" (43. 20), the conception is quite literal. There are to be real springs in the desert where even the despised jackals may quench their thirst. His heart is so full of the love of God that even the very animals must share in the joy of the new day.

And yet sometimes his hopes are so burningly bright that he bursts into hyperbole. We hear him saying, "Behold, I will set thy stones in fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy pinnacles of rubies, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy border of precious stones" (54. 11, 12). We are here, of course, not to bind him down to the literal

meaning, but rather to stop and admire the audacity of that faith which visualized even the common garden walls of the New Jerusalem as built of jewels.

If, as many scholars believe, these latter chapters were written after the return from the exile, their idealism is all the more impressive, for it must have been very hard to keep up the courage of the little company as they camped on the ruins of the old city, facing the impenetrable mass of briars and thorns that had overgrown the fields and vineyards, and pestered incessantly by the jealous and sometimes murderous hostility of the tribes that had settled in the land.

But this vision was too splendid to be confined to Israel alone. The prophet's idea of God and of the simple demands of God was such that by an irresistible impulse he reached out his arms of invitation to the whole world. And we hear him exclaim: "Neither let the foreigner that hath joined himself to Jehovah speak, saying, Jehovah will surely separate me from his people; . . . For thus saith Jehovah . . . the foreigners that join themselves to Jehovah, to minister unto him, and to love the name of Jehovah, . . . even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; . . . for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (56. 3-7).

### SEARCH QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

#### THE SITUATION PRESUPPOSED BY ISAIAH 54 TO 66

I. Scholars assert that, unlike Chapters 40 to 53, there are no references in Chapters 54 to 66 that suggest that either the audience to whom it was addressed, or the writer of the prophecy, was in exile. Glance through these chapters to verify this assertion.



2. Scholars suggest that Chapters 54 to 66 contain material that was written after the return from exile, but before the restoration of the ruined city and the temple. Do you find anything in Chapters 54 and 64 to suggest that it was written after a time of great destruction, and before the destruction had been repaired?

3. What indications of impatience at the slow dawning of the hoped-for good times do you find at the beginning of Chapters 59 and 64?

4. What indication do you find in Chapter 56 that after the return from exile they were still faced with the tragedy of incompetent, lazy, and drunken leadership?

#### THE IDEAL JERUSALEM

5. In what daring words does the prophet in Chapter 54 predict the brilliant glory of the ideal Jerusalem? Wherein is the picture of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21. 10-27 similar?

6. Where in Chapter 60 is there material which may have suggested the Revelator's vision of the New Jerusalem as a city into which the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor, a city whose gates are never shut, and which needs neither sun nor moon to lighten it?

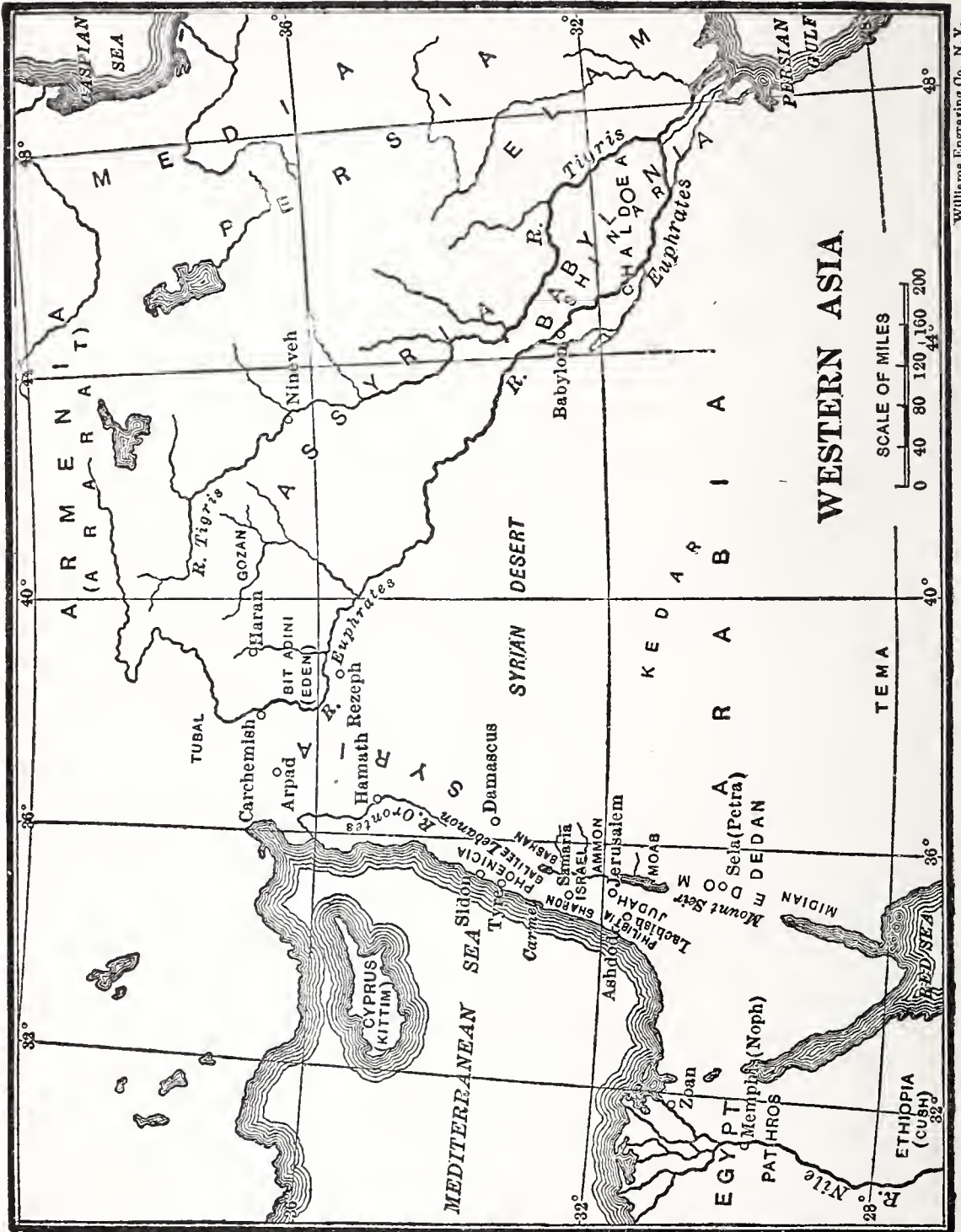
#### MORAL REQUIREMENTS FOR CITIZENSHIP IN THE NEW JERUSALEM

7. It has been said that the fast by which the modern rich man would best please God would be a fast from excessive dividends at the expense of underpaid employees. Where do you find a similar idea in Chapter 58?

8. Where in Chapter 62 does the prophet show that he has great faith in the power of prayer as an instrument of social reconstruction? Compare Luke 18. 1-18.

9. It had been very difficult to observe the Sabbath in Babylon. What indication do you find in Chapter 58 that the prophet felt it important to re-establish this national custom? What two points in Sabbath observance, one negative and one positive, does he emphasize?

10. The Samaritan woman anxiously asked which was the most holy place in which to worship God (John 4. 19-24). Read Jesus' answer to her and then find something in Isaiah 66 that is parallel to it.



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